

THE
POSTHUMOUS WORKS

George O E *Whitaker* 1799
JEREMIAH SEED, M. A. *K*

Late Rector of *Enham* in *Hampshire*,

And Fellow of *Queen's College, Oxford.*

Consisting of

SERMONS, LETTERS, ESSAYS, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Published from the AUTHOR's original Manuscripts.

By JOSEPH HALL, M. A.

Fellow of *Queen's College, Oxford.*

V O L. I.

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VOLUME I.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

Moral Certainty a sufficient Ground for the Belief of Christianity.

2 PETER I. 16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Pag. 1

SERMON II.

Improbabilities not sufficient to invalidate Moral Certainty.

HEBREWS X. 23. *Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering: for he is faithful that promised.* 21

SERMON III.

The usual Objections against Revelation founded in Ignorance.

1 COR. I. 25. *The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men; and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.* 45

SERMON IV.

The usual Objections against Revelation founded in Ignorance.

1 COR. I. 25. *The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men; and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.* 63

SERMON V.

The Damnatory Clauses in the ATHANASIAN Creed justified.

MARK XVI. 16. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* 82

CONTENTS.

SERMON VI.

The Being, Nature and Offices of Evil Spirits considered.

1 PET. V. 9. *latter Part. — Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Pag. 106

SERMON VII.

Curiosity in unnecessary Matters censured and condemned.

JOHN XXI. 22. *— If I will, that He tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow Thou me.* 126

SERMON VIII.

Delight in GOD the Origin and Perfection of human Pleasure.

PSALM XXXVII. 4. *Delight Thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give Thee the Desires of thine Heart.* 141

SERMON IX.

The Duty of honouring the KING founded on the Fear of GOD.

1 PET. II. 17. *Fear GOD, Honour the KING.* 156

SERMON X.

Religious Pleasures productive of the greatest Happiness.

PROV. III. 17. *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.* 176

SERMON XI.

Of Anger, Meekness, &c.

EPHES. IV. 26. *Be ye angry, and sin not.* 188

SERMON XII.

The Happiness of the GOOD in a future State.

MATTHEW XXV. 21. *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; Thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things: enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* 220

SERMON

S E R M O N I.

Moral Certainty a sufficient Ground for
the Belief of Christianity.

Preached in *Queen's College Chapel.*

2 PETER I. 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables;
when we made known unto you the Power and
Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

WHETHER attentively peruses the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, will scarce need any other Proof to convince him, *that they did not follow cunningly devised Fables*, or draw up an artificial Account of Things. There are at least as strong Proofs for the Genuineness even of the *controverted* Books of Scripture, as there are for that of any *uncontroverted* Book in *Pagan* Antiquity. But let us suppose it to be, what it is not, a Matter of Uncertainty, whether such a Record of Christianity be His whose Name it bears; still we must distinguish between the *Author* and the *Authority* of the Book. Whatever becomes of the *Author*, the *Authority* of the Book is unquestionably good; if it be shewn, that it could not have been received

SERM.
I.

SERM. from the first by a vast number of Persons as a *true*

I. History, but upon a Supposition that it really was so; it being an impracticable Thing to obtrude upon the world a Variety of *recent* Facts with the most memorable and glaring Circumstances, asserted to be done before the Chief Priests and Scribes, and the whole People of *Jerusalem*, as Spectators and Eye-witnesses. Whoever were the Authors of the Gospels, they certainly expected to be believed: But how could they have *expected* any such Thing in case of an Imposture, when they refer expressly and by Name, to *Time*, *Place*, and *Person*; when they virtually appeal to the Senses of that very Age and Nation for the Truth of their Relations? It is not the Interest of an Impostor to be *particular, explicit, and circumstantial*: He must avoid, as a Rock upon which he must inevitably split, *Dates of Time*, the particular Place of Action, (especially if it be a public one; and near at Hand, where such a Miracle is pretended to be wrought) the *Names, Number, and Rank* of the Spectators. His Art consists in laying the Scene at a great Distance, in giving *general, confused, and undistinguished* Accounts of Things, and in skulking behind a thousand Evasions, those Holes which Creatures of Subtlety have sequestered from the Light of the Sun; and to which they always retreat, when closely pursued. Whereas in the *New Testament* there is that undissembled Openness of Soul, that unaffected Frankness and unconstrained Freedom, in relating Things with perfect Ease and without any Effort; which could come from none but *ingenuous* Writers, and can, I think, be resisted by none but *disingenuous* Readers.

Add

Add to this, that whoever were the *Authors*, they were *inspired*. For one of the notorious Facts on which great Stress in many Places is laid, is, that the *Holy Ghost* was given by the laying on of the *Apostles Hands*; in Consequence of which the new Converts prophesied and spoke with *new Tongues*. For the Truth of this *St. Paul* appeals to the Church of *Corinth*; and if it had not been true, he must have been looked upon by them as an abandoned Impostor, charging them with the Abuse and Misapplication of spiritual and miraculous Gifts they never had. Whoever intends to deceive, must be solicitous to save the Appearances of Truth; which, upon a Supposition of the Falsity of this Fact, *St. Paul* by no means did. For he lays down *that* as a known Truth, which those to whom he addressed his Epistle must know, from what passed within them, to be egregiously false. Now if there was such a plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit even to those who did no distinguished Service to the Church; we cannot rationally suppose it was denied to those, who made it their honest Endeavour to perpetuate the Faith by their Writings. The Dew of Heaven, while it descended on Places comparatively waste and barren, would not be withheld from a more kindly Soil, productive of the most generous Fruits for the Service and Food of Man.

In prosecuting this Subject, I shall shew,

Ist, How far and in what Degree an Assent to the Truth of Christianity is obligatory upon us, supposing a Sufficiency of Evidence for it.

SERM. *Idly*, That there is such a Sufficiency of Evidence for it, that we cannot, consistently with Reason, refuse to be determined by it.

I.

Idly, I shall conclude with a short Reflection on the Importance of Christianity, and our Insensibility of its just Value.

Christianity stands upon the very same Footing as *Morality* does, in Point of Obligation. For we resolve the Obligation of *Morality*, or trace it up to its Fountain-Head, after the following Manner.

Virtue is necessarily productive of the Happiness of Mankind; and Vice of Misery and Confusion.

A Being of infinite Benevolence must *will* whatever is necessarily productive of general Happiness.

Every Creature is obliged to conform himself to the Will of his Creator.

To apply this to *Christianity*. One cannot consistently disbelieve *Christianity*, without disbelieving every Thing else, that has *only* the *same* Degree of Evidence. — One cannot disbelieve every Thing else that has the *same* Degree of Evidence, without proceeding upon a Principle, that is, in its genuine Tendency, destructive of universal Happiness, and defeats the very End of our social Nature. — One cannot therefore disbelieve *Christianity* without counteracting the great Will and sovereign Pleasure of him, who made us social Beings, and wills the Happiness of all his Creatures. — The Consequence of which is, that the Belief of *Christianity* is as obligatory, terminating ultimately in the Will of the Deity, as is the Practice of *Morality*; and stands upon the very same Foundation. The End of Society cannot be attained,

attained, if there be nothing to be believed, or depended upon between Man and Man; or, if there be no satisfactory Grounds why a Thing is to be depended upon; or, if we be not obliged to pay any Regard to them. For which Reason, *Deism*, if it could be consistent with itself, in the last Resort must lead to and terminate in *Atheism*. For there could be no Providence, if the World were all Chaos and Confusion. Now the World must be all Chaos and Confusion, (there being nothing left for us to depend upon in our Intercourse with one another,) upon a Supposition that Moral Evidence, however perfect in its Kind, does but lead us into Error. For if there be such a Thing as Providence, all the Administrations of it from the Beginning have proceeded, and the Course of the World has been ordered, upon a Supposition that there is such a Thing as Sincerity and a Regard for Truth prevailing among Mankind; and that there are certain Marks to distinguish, in many Cases, *Honesty* from *Imposture*. But the Scheme of the *Deists* (as they set aside the Testimony of the Apostles and primitive Martyrs, who have as fair Pretensions to *Honesty*, as any other Persons) must proceed upon a contrary Supposition; that the World is one wide Scene of Villainy and Confusion; that we may weary ourselves in the Search of a Man of Sense that is not a Deceiver; and a Man of *Honesty* that is not a Dupe. The Wheels of Government must be interrupted and stand still, if such Evidences, as Christianity is attended with, be exploded as fallacious and uncertain. No proper Measures can be taken, upon this Supposition, to prevent a Rebellion, to crush it in its Infancy, or to make a Head

SERM. against it, when become formidable. We must not

I. believe any Thing that we hear, however concerning it may be to ourselves, and however well attested by Persons superior to any sinister Designs; and thus Wisdom would be quite shut out at one great Entrance. We cannot depreciate Moral Certainty without striking at the Belief of an over-ruling Providence. For there can be no Providence, unless there be an orderly Course of Things, and some regular Plan which takes place. One would not chuse to live in a World where there was no Order, no Principle of mutual Trust and social Union, no Dependence of one Person upon another. One would not chuse to sit out a Play, where the Drama was ill conducted; where every Thing was disjointed, without any Unity of Design, or Connection of one Thing with another. The Truth is, Men *cannot*, were they never so much inclined to it in all Cases, act up to that Principle, by Virtue of which some reject Christianity. They *cannot*, without always putting a Force upon Nature. Now Nature has a Kind of Elasticity and Spring, by which it recovers itself, when it is violently pressed and a Force put upon it. If Matter of Fact, Sense and Experience were not too hard for all the ingenious and subtle Reasonings, which Men of Leisure and Parts may invent against almost any Thing whatever, we should be in perpetual Danger of running into universal Scepticism.

By acting then upon such Grounds and Principles, as those whereon Christianity is founded, we act agreeably to the Laws of Nature; our social Nature; and consequently express our Duty to the Author of
our

our Nature and its Laws: In other Words, we act SERM,
 religiously, virtuously, and rationally. If Mankind I.
 be rational Beings, the Welfare of Mankind must
 be the Welfare of a rational Nature; and therefore
 the Laws which advance it must be founded in Reason;
 nor can their Authority be resisted by any
 Thing but what is at the same Time opposite to
 Reason, and therefore to Truth: Consequently, the
 Denial of Moral Evidence as well as of Immorality,
 must be contrary to Truth and Reason; because the
 Denial in both Cases would be subversive of human
 Happiness and ruinous in its Consequences.

Nay, if some Persons of the first Distinction in the
 Philosophical World reason justly; the Evidence of
 the Truth of our *Senses* is placed upon no *better*
 Foundation, than that of the Truth of Christianity.
 For they argue thus; there being no strict Demon-
 stration that Bodies exist, or that there is a material
 World; the only Argument that seems to have the
 Force of one, is this; it is evident God cannot de-
 ceive us by Appearances instead of Realities; it is
 evident he does delude us every Moment, if there be
 no Bodies; it is evident therefore there must be Bo-
 dies. Whatever Weight this Kind of arguing may
 have, it is fully as conclusive in Favour of Moral
 Evidence, and consequently of what is founded upon
 Moral Evidence, the Truth of Christianity. It ad-
 mits of no Dispute, that we are obliged to be deter-
 mined by the Laws of our Nature, which are in the
 last Resort the Laws of God; and that the Deity has
 laid us under a Necessity of closing with moral Proofs.
 Now the Deity can no more lay us under a moral
 Necessity of submitting to an unavoidable Delusion

SERM. in Affairs of a moral Nature, than he can subject us

I. to a perpetual Deception, as to the Reports of the Senses. Therefore Moral Evidence, when compleat in its Kind, can no more delude us, than the Perception of the Senses can be altogether delusory. Nay Evidence of this Nature, though not so striking, seems sometimes equivalent to that of Sense, and is productive of as undoubted an Assurance. But this brings me to shew,

II^{dly}, That there is such a Sufficiency of Evidence for Christianity, that we cannot, consistently with Reason, refuse to be determined by it.

There are as strong Proofs, that Jesus and his Apostles wrought Miracles, as that such Men ever existed. And the only Reason, why few or none dispute their Existence, whereas several deny the Reality of their Miracles, is ; that their Existence considered apart from Circumstances relative to us, is an uninteresting Point ; and, nothing depending upon it, Reason is left in its full Freedom to determine as it sees Evidence. But the Miracles being wrought to establish a Religion, by which we are to be saved or condemned ; the Passions immediately take the Alarm, and are up in Arms as against an Enemy that is come to disturb their Repose, and reduce their exorbitant Power. For the Resistance to Truth bears generally an exact Proportion to its Weight or Moment.

It is idle for the *Deists* to run out into long Declarations against Historical Evidence ; that it is in many Cases precarious and uncertain ; that Historians give different, and sometimes contradictory Reports

ports of the very same Action. This is only to SERM.
empty their Quiver in the Air without aiming at a I.
certain Mark. It is to discharge their Artillery
against Historical Evidence at large, without level-
ling it against the particular Point in Debate: The
Question not being, whether Historical Evidence
may not be sometimes uncertain and inconclusive?
But whether any Evidence can be so, that is so cir-
cumstanced as that for Christianity is? Where, if
there had been any Imposture, it was utterly impos-
sible but that the Imposture must have been disco-
vered and the World undeceived. Thousands could
not have been converted to Christianity, and have
died for it, unless it had carried the strongest Con-
viction with it. For Men will not embrace a new
Institution, subversive of every other, in Opposition
to their former Prejudices and worldly Interest, with-
out very forcible Proofs. Miraculous Facts said to
be done in the Eye of the World for a Course of
Years, before a great Number of Witnesses, before
Enemies as well as Friends (not to confirm an esta-
blished Religion, but to build a new one upon the
Ruins of the former) could not have been believed
to be true, if they were not so, by those who lived at
that Juncture; and in those public Places where they
pretended to work them; such as *Jerusalem, Ephesus,*
Antioch, Corinth, &c. For a Set of Men to endea-
vour to deceive the World in such an astonishing
Manner, would have been looked upon as an auda-
cious and unparallelled Attempt to impose upon the
Senses of Mankind; and Christianity in that Case
would have been like the Grass growing upon the
House-Top; by lying so open and exposed, and
wanting

SERM. wanting a sufficient Depth of Soil, it would have
 I withered away of itself, and prevented the Violence
 of any hostile Hand.

But suppose, through some unaccountable Enthusiasm or Madness which then seized and possessed the Minds of the *People*, it had spread far and near; yet in this Case the *Jewish Rulers and Magistrates* could never have stood by unconcerned, as idle Spectators. They were highly interested to detect the Falshood, and to do themselves Justice, as being charged with the Murder of an innocent Person. They were obliged in Duty to their Law, in Charity to their own Nation and the World, to suppress, as far as they could, the Belief of the Resurrection, and the subsequent Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it. By their Authority they could, and by their Inclination they would have exploded the Imposture: They would have invalidated all the Testimonies relating to these false Facts, if false they had been, by producing strong Counter-Evidence.

The Apostles on the other Hand, supposing the *Truth* of the Resurrection, had all the Reasons that worldly Prudence could suggest to have concealed it; since they could not but foresee, that to maintain it would draw upon them a Train of fatal Consequences. But supposing the *Falshood* of it, all the *Motives* both of this World and the next conspired against their Propagation of it. They could not not think that the Chiefs of the *Jewish State* would let them publish every where throughout the World, that they had shed innocent Blood, the Blood of the *Prince of Life, whom God had raised up*, without calling them to an Account for it.

A long

A long continued Succession of wonderful Works, many of them said to have been performed in Places of the greatest Resort, (as any one that reads the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles may find) must have laid open to public Examination; and, if false, to public Detection. The chief Men among them, as their Reputation, Religion, and Interest were struck at, had all the Motives to detect and suppress Christianity (which were wanting for the Propagation and Success of it) and they had all the Advantages imaginable to compass their End. And had the Men of Power and Policy, who were extreme to mark any Thing amiss in their Conduct, convicted the Apostles of *one* Falshood; their Credit must have been for ever after blasted. Truth itself would have been suspected from Persons proved guilty of a solemn and deliberate Villainy, yet pretending to act it in the Name of God; but Falshood could not have been credited. Imposture is like that Kind of Animal, which does a great deal of Mischief; but then it is only while it works in secret and under Cover: As soon as it appears above Ground and is discovered in Day-Light, it is rendered incapable of doing any further Detriment. Their Enemies, right or wrong, would endeavour to fully the Brightness of their Characters. And when one considers them in their exalted Situation as Ambassadors of God, a Spectacle to Mankind on the open Theatre of the World, they must (plain and unlearned as they were) have acted their Parts with uncommon Address not to have been discovered. Like Statues placed on an high Pedestal, they must have been somewhat bigger than the Life, not to look less than it; I mean they

SERM. they must have *been better* than the common run of

I. Men, not to have *appeared worse* than them; when their Actions and Characters would be scanned with all the Quick-sightedness of Malice, ever vigilant to seek Occasion against them.

In short, the Facts thus circumstanced prove themselves; and the only Reason why, at the Time and Place when and where they were said to be done, they were *believed* to be true by Persons tenacious of another Religion, is, that they *were* true; as the only Reason why a self-evident Proposition which draws after it a Train of unacceptable Consequences is admitted to be true, is, that it cannot be denied. All other Suppositions are forced and unnatural, and such as would not be endured by any Man of common Sense in any other Case.

Nay, no Account can be given, why the Chief Priests and Rulers, who could suborn the Soldiers to tell a senseless Falshood about the *Resurrection*, did not attempt to disprove the *other marvellous Facts*, though convinced that they were true, but this; that they were so notoriously true, it would have been of no Avail to have denied them. It would have been as ridiculous, at that Time and in that Place, to have set about a Confutation of such over-bearing Evidence, as it would have been to have denied a self-evident Proposition. They might as well have asserted that the *Feast of Pentecost* was not observed at *Jerusalem*, as that the Miracle of the *Gift of Tongues* was not wrought publicly at that Festival, when there were so many living Witnesses from every *Nation under Heaven* to attest the Truth of it.

Nay,

Nay, so far were the ancient Jews, however virulent, from confronting the Evidence for Christianity, that the *Jerusalem Talmud* *, which contains a Collection of the Traditions of their Forefathers, and was composed about three hundred Years after the Birth of our Saviour, has preserved the Memory of some of our Saviour's Miracles, as that he *walked on the Sea, and that he raised the Dead*; and it mentions the very Persons by Name with particular Circumstances, whom St. James miraculously cured, though their Distempers were mortal, by the Name of *Jesus Christ*. The State of the Question is now changed; in those early Times they did not (and the only Reason was, they *could not*) contest the Reality of the Miracles; what they contested was, the Inference from thence; the Truth of the Doctrines: The ablest of our modern Adversaries own, the Doctrines must be allowed to be true, supposing the Miracles actually wrought; but deny that they were wrought. For thus One of the most sagacious of them says, (and what he says is very true) "God can never be supposed often to permit Miracles to be done in Confirmation of a false or pretended Mission." Add to this, that several thousands, who must be privy to the Imposture, if there was one, sealed the Truth of Christianity with their Blood. They, like *Samson*, and like him too with a Strength superior to their own, attempted to pull down the Temple of Heathenism; and to lay the Edifice, the Work of Ages, low in the Dust; at the same Time that they foresaw they should be buried in its Ruins; and like

* See Bishop Chandler's Defence of Christianity, Pages 429, 430.

SERM. him, destroyed more Enemies to the true Religion
 I. at and by their Deaths, than they did in their Lives.

Out of a numberless List of Martyrs let us single out St. *Simeon* Bishop of *Jerusalem*, laying down, at the Age of one hundred and twenty Years, that Life, for the Truth of Christianity, which he had conducted by the Precepts of it; whose extreme old Age was of the lowest Consideration to make him venerable. Was this Person a deluded Zealot? No; he who was a near Relation of our Saviour, and intimately conversant with him and the Apostles, could not be ignorant of their Characters, Views and Actions; this admits of no Dispute, and needs no laboured Proof. Was he then an artful Deluder? But could he, conscious that Christ and his Apostles were Deceivers, profess his Faith in him to the last, when he was three Days, as *Hegeffippus*, (an early Writer of the same Church) informs us, in dying by Piece-Meal, under the most exquisite Tortures; while Death advanced by Degrees, in it's most ghastly Form? How could he, I say, profess his Faith to the last, and rejoice in his Sufferings with such determined Chearfulness as surprised his Tormentors? Yes, some will say, *Vain-glory* is a very strong Passion. Vain-glorious Wretch beyond Example! To be expanding all his Sails, and striving to gather in every Blast of Applause at the same Time that his weak Vessel, decayed by Age, was sinking irretrievably in the Deep, by a most violent Storm! Was this all he had in View, to make one short-lived Blaze, just as the Candle was sinking in the Socket, and then go out in everlasting Night? Certainly when Pain pressed rudely in, and boisterously,

roufly, for a long Time, demanded to be heard; it would at last awaken him, however profound his Repose might be, from an airy Dream, of an imaginary Existence after Death. Hopes of immortal Bliss, in Case he were a Deceiver, he could have none, but rather a *fearful looking for of Judgment to come.* The Desire of posthumous Applause is artificially raised; and those Passions, which are introduced by Art, must always at length give Way to those that are inborn (especially to so invincible a one as that of Happiness) and throw off the incumbent Weight of long-uninterrupted Misery. It is not a Plant which our heavenly Father hath planted, it is not the native Growth of the Soil, and therefore it must come to nought, and die away by the rigorous Inclemency of the Season. Idle and empty Reflections upon leaving a Name behind us, cannot stand their Ground against unintermitting uneasy Sensations of three Days Continuance; but must vanish before them, *like as Wax melteth at the Fire.*

Those who resolve such Effects into *Pride*, ought to produce some Instances from History, when and where *Pride* has had such an Effect. Ask now of the Days that are past, which were before Thee, since the Day that God created Man on the Earth; and ask from the one Side of Heaven to the other, whether there hath been any such Thing as this, or hath been heard like it? viz. that several thousands, in the early Persecutions of Nero, Domitian and Trajan, should lay down their Lives not for a false Religion independent on certain Facts (for that is a very possible Case;) but for a false Religion, whose pretended Basis was certain Matters of Fact said to be lately done, and

SERM. and when they must have known whether they

I. were done or not, without a most unheard-of and unexampled Neglect to inquire into the Foundation on which they rested.

God cannot, consistently with his Goodness, and Veracity, reduce his Creatures to such a Case (especially if a Case of Importance, that they cannot act reasonably without yielding their Assent to a Falshood — They cannot act reasonably without yielding their Assent to Christianity — Therefore Christianity is no Falshood. They cannot act but in a Manner, which would be deemed unreasonable in any other Affair.

For, to put the Matter at the lowest; does any Man, whether Believer or Unbeliever, doubt, or pretend to doubt, that there was such a Man as *Mahomet*, who propagated his Imposture by the Force of Arms? Certainly there are at least as strong Proofs that the Apostles propagated Christianity by Miracles, as that *Mahomet* in a dark and unenlightened Age established his false Religion by Violence, Rapine, and the Power of the Sword. And if the Apostles did several Miracles by the Power of God; then they spoke and wrote with Authority from God; and consequently the Belief of their Doctrines is obligatory upon us.

In a Word, if there be any Moral Certainty for Matter of Fact, it is morally certain, that our Saviour and his Apostles wrought many Miracles; — It is morally certain, that God would not suffer many Miracles to be wrought to confirm an Imposture. — It is morally certain therefore that Christianity is no Imposture. And as for all the Objections
against

against this Religion, they are of no Avail, for this plain Reason, because they are Arguments against Matter of Fact. For when once it is morally certain, that a Thing *has* been, *viz.* that several Miracles have been wrought, all the Arguments and Objections in the World cannot prove that it has *not* been.

The *Deists* have never offered any rational Scheme or tolerable Hypothesis to account for all the Marks of Credibility and strong Appearances of Truth and Divinity in the Christian *Revelation* (supposing nothing more than *Human* concerned in the Publication, Propagation and Establishment of it) any more than the *Atheists* have offered any plausible Scheme to solve all the Appearances of Goodness, Wisdom and Design in the *Creation*, without supposing an infinitely wise and good God, the Author and Preserver of it. They are obliged to admit of a Fact, *viz.* the speedy and amazing Progress of the Gospel, of which it is impossible for them to give any Account, when not only a possible, but an easy and satisfactory Account may be given of it. They are obliged to allow that an Effect was brought about without a Cause, or, what is the same Thing, without a Cause proportionate to it, when a Cause equal to the Effect may be easily assigned. Our Saviour's Command to the Apostles, *Go and teach all Nations*, would have been as ridiculous without a Certainty of Divine Assistance, as if he had bid them, *Go, and subdue all Nations by the Force of Arms*. Nor could it have been done without a proper Furniture of a great Variety of Languages, so as to enable them to converse easily and fluently every where with the Per-

SERM. sons, to whom they address'd themselves, in their
 I. several respective Tongues. If it be said that their
 Knowledge of *Greek*, alone might qualify them for
 this Undertaking, it being then an universal Language, and *spoke*, or at least *understood* every where; I answer, it is plain from a remarkable Place in *Cæsar's Commentaries* *, that it *was not*: That great General, writing to *Quintus Cicero* his Lieutenant in *Greek*, for Fear, if his Letter were intercepted, the Enemy should gain Intelligence of his Designs.

A Man must be either very *careless* or very *laborious* to be an Unbeliever. He must labour very hard and struggle against Conviction, to darken and pervert the strongest Evidences, and to discolour his genuine Sense of Things: or he must have been so careless as never to have spent any Thought at all upon the Matter, but have taken his Infidelity upon Trust and at second Hand. But to be a Believer, where there is such a Fulness of Evidence, is the most easy, natural State of the Mind.

I have now dispatched the first and second Heads of my Discourse, as far as the Time would permit, and hasten

III^{dly}, To conclude with a short Reflection on the Importance of Christianity, and our Insensibility of its just Value.

If there be no future State of Happiness, of what Avail is it to think, or pretend to think freely? Un-

* Lib. V. XLVIII. Edit. Davis. Polani Stratagemat. Lib. VIII. Cap. XXIII.

limited Range and Freedom of Thought may be the Cry ; but the Aim of every wise Man should in that Case be Freedom *from* Thought ; since every Thought, that he could send abroad, would bring Home this melancholy Truth ; that he was a miserable Creature, ever importunate in his Demands for Happiness, but never to have those Demands satisfied. But if there be a future State of Felicity, then Revelation must be of the utmost Importance to ascertain to us, what, when and where, and how long it is to be, and that the present State is our final State of Trial. Christianity, however important, has now been long a familiar and common Blessing, and has undergone the Misfortune of all other common Blessings, to be disregarded, merely because it is so. To retrieve a just, or what is the same Thing, a great Esteem for it, as pure and unadulterated ; it seems as if it were necessary that some gross Corruption of Religion should be substituted for a while in it's stead : as Sickness, or a Body full of Wounds and putrifying Sores, makes us know, how to value, what we neglected before, the Blessings of Health and a vigorous Constitution. Christianity is like an Object held too close and near to us to be viewed in the best Light ; it must be removed to some Distance from us, to be seen by us in the most advantageous Point of View. Then, however insensible we may be of it's *absolute* Value or Excellence, we shall at least discern it's *comparative* Worth ; it's Worth compared with Mahometism, Enthusiasm and Paganism. It certainly is the most

SERM. heavenly Religion that ever was, tending most of
 I. all to raise our Affections to Heaven, and therefore
 most worthy of the peculiar Interposition of Hea-
 ven, and most likely to have *come down from Hea-
 ven*, from that Being, from whom every *good and
 perfect Gift* descendeth. To whom Father, Son and
 Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

Improbabilities not sufficient to invalidate Moral Certainty.

Preached before the Univerfity of Oxford. And afterwards at the Vifitation at Andover, Sept. 11, 1745.

HEBREWS X. 23.

Let us hold faft the Profefſion of our Faith without wavering : for he is faithful that promifed.

“ **H**OW a Man may qualify himſelf, ſo as SERM.
 “ to be able to settle his Principles and fix II.
 “ his Sentiments in Religious Matters ;
 “ and then to enjoy Tranquillity of Mind, nei-
 “ ther diſturb- ing others, nor being greatly diſturbed
 “ at what paſſes among them ?” is a very intereſting
 Query ; and it were to be wiſhed that the Au-
 thor *, from whom, with ſome little Variations
 of Expreſſion, I have borrowed the Queſtion, had
 given us his Thoughts upon it ; which would have
 carried him beyond the Bounds of *Natural Religion*,
 to which he confines himſelf. For the Inſufficiency
 of *Natural Religion* to this Purpoſe has been fully
 ſhewn ; and *Revelation* (ſuppoſing a thorough Convic-

* See Woolaſton's Religion of Nature, Page 1. Queſt. 3.

SERM. tion of its Truth) sets the Mind at Rest in several
 II. very concerning Points, as to which, in a State of
 { *Natural Religion*, it would be ever *seeking Rest and finding none*. Shall we then, dissatisfied, as every thinking Man must be, without better Assistances than *Natural Religion* furnishes, embrace the Belief of *Revelation*, as necessary to beget in us a firm Composure of Mind? This would do, if some Passages not easily cleared up, and some seeming Improbabilities did not occur throughout the Records of it; if *specious Objections* both in Books and Conversation were not continually urged against it; which fill People's Heads with Doubts and Scruples, and their Minds with Uneasiness.

How then can a Man order Matters so, as to be fixed in his Principles, and easy in his Mind (which he cannot well be without being fixed in his Principles, as far as they relate to Matters of Importance) amidst all the Altercations and Disputes, which are, and perhaps ever will be, in Agitation, to the End of the World? This is a Question which nearly concerns us; and to come to any Satisfaction about it, the only Expedient that offers itself is, to apprise ourselves of the Truth of the following Propositions:

Ist, That no *seeming Improbabilities*, no *Objections*, be they ever so numerous, provided they do not amount to an *absolute Impossibility*, ought to reverse an Assent, which is founded, as the Assent to Christianity is, upon *Moral Certainty*.

II^{dly}, That there does not appear any *absolute* SERM.
II.
Impossibility in the Contexture of the *Christian Revelation*. The Consequence of which is,

III^{dly}. That a thinking Man may enjoy himself with perfect Ease and Tranquillity, in the Profession and Belief of Christianity ; which he cannot do, if he think upon the Stretch, in a State of Infidelity.

I begin with the first of these Propositions, *viz.* that no *seeming Improbabilities*, no *Objections*, &c.

By *Moral Certainty* is meant such an Evidence, as, though it does not exclude a mere *abstract Possibility* of Things being otherwise, shuts out every reasonable Ground of suspecting, that they are so ; an Evidence which we cannot reject, without contradicting the common Sense and Reason of Mankind. It is an Evidence of so high a Nature, that Men of plain Understandings generally confound it with *absolute Certainty* ; and would be surprized to hear any Man assert that *it is only probable in the highest Degree*, that there is such a Country as *Italy*. Yet it is in the same Sense, that Philosophers must be understood, when they say, that it is only *highly probable*, that our Saviour and his Apostles wrought several uncontrouled Miracles, by which they proved the Divinity of their Mission and the Truth of their Doctrines ; meaning by *highly probable*, that it is not *capable of rigorous Demonstration*, it is *morally certain*, but not *scientifically* so. The Bulk of Mankind can well enough distinguish Certainty in general from Uncertainty ; but to ascer-

SERM. II. tain all the Boundaries and Degrees of Evidence, to fix precisely the Point, where absolute Certainty ends, and moral Certainty begins, is a Task, to which at least unimproved Capacities are not suited; like those common Machines, which serve well enough for all the Purposes of Life to inform one in general, how the Time passes, without pointing out to a Tittle the minutest and smallest Differences of Time.

Taking it for granted (what every one who has written upon the Subject has proved) that Christianity is founded upon *moral* Certainty; it will follow, that, if we be not absolutely secure from a *physical Possibility* of Error; we are certainly secure from the Guilt and *Immorality* of Error in embracing it. For He at least stands clear of Immorality and Guilt, who acts agreeably to the Will of his Creator; and he acts agreeably to his Will, who is determined by *moral* Certainty: Because unless moral Certainty were allowed to be a proper and rational Ground of Conviction, all Administration of Justice must cease; all Truth and Commerce stagnate; and such a Scene of Confusion be opened, as must be highly disagreeable to God, who is a *God of Order and not of Confusion*. God formed us social Creatures: Now we cannot act as social Creatures, without some Degree of mutual Trust reposed in one another; and no mutual Trust can be reposed in one another, if those are not to be depended upon who gave, as the Apostles and primitive Martyrs did give, the strongest Proofs of their Integrity. The numerous Converts to Christianity in the first Century could not have believed it to be true, if it had been false. For not to mention other Things, they must have had an inward Con-
sciousness,

sciousness, whether they had received those miraculous Gifts or not; for the Abuse and Misapplication of which St. *Paul*, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, reproves and censures them. They must have had an *absolute* Certainty, supposing no extraordinary Gifts were communicated to them, that he from whom they received their Religion, and whose Epistles, as appears from St. *Peter* and others, were universally read as of divine Authority, was a shameless Impostor. And yet they could not have professed the Belief of it, knowing it to be an Imposture, at a Time when Christians were of all Men most miserable, without any Prospect of worldly Honour or Advantage, but with a certain Expectation of exquisite Torments; except upon a Supposition, that they loved Misery and avoided Happiness *as such*.

In a Word, Society must disband upon the same absurd Principle, whereby some labour the Subversion of Christianity, *viz.* the Denial of the Force and Validity of *moral* Certainty. Rigorous and strict Demonstrations resemble precious Stones; with whatever Lustre and Brightness of Evidence they may shine, they cannot be purchased without great Expence of Thought; and when they are purchased, they are not always necessary for the Uses of common Life. Whereas Moral Evidence is like current Species: It is current Proof on which the Stamp of Credibility is fixed, and by which the common Business of Life is carried on.

Though we have not an absolute Certainty that we *cannot err*, yet we have an absolute Certainty that we *do not sin*, in yielding our Assent to such moral Proofs, as Christianity is supported by. And when
this

SERM. this transient Scene is closed, the grand Question

II. may be, as far as Matters of Belief are concerned, not whether the Doctrines which we embraced had their Foundation in the Truth and Reality of Things, but whether the Evidence, upon which we embraced them, was of an obligatory Nature or not: Since if it were of an obligatory Nature, then, tho' they should prove to be false, yet we may be as much the Objects of the divine Displeasure for rejecting them, as if they had been true. For we may certainly be justly punished for not complying with such Evidence, as God has laid us under an Obligation to submit to, and to which we do, without any Hesitation, submit in the highest Concernments of Life.

What has been hitherto advanced, proceeds upon a Supposition, that such Evidence may *possibly misguide* us: But if we take the Veracity and Goodness of God into the Account, we may advance a Step higher in the Scale of Certainty, and arrive at such a determined Proportion of it, as no Improbabilities can destroy the Force and Weight of it. For let there be never so many Improbabilities in Christianity, yet as long as they are but *Improbabilities*, and do not amount to a *direct Impossibility* in the Nature of the Thing, then there is no absolute Impossibility but some rational Solution of them may be given: But it is absolutely impossible in the Nature of the Thing, and contradictory to our Ideas of God, that he should mislead us, or, which is the same Thing, necessitate us to be governed by such Evidence, as must mislead us, in Points of the last Importance. If a Faith, which is built upon moral and indubitable Proofs, should be erroneous, then he who has
made

made it our bounden Duty, by the Exigences of human Affairs and by the Laws of our Nature, to close with such Proofs, designed it should be so; and consequently must be, in the last Resort, the Author of Error; to assert which is Blasphemy. We are reduced to no Absurdity in embracing several Things as true, upon just and legitimate Proofs; which, antecedently to such Proofs, we should have rejected as highly incredible and improbable; for such an Assent is warranted by the same Procedure in every Branch of Literature, and even in that Branch which requires the strictest Certainty, as is plain from the Case of *Infinities* of all Sorts. But we are reduced to a Train of Absurdities of the worst Sort, by withholding our Assent from what is founded upon moral Certainty; since if that Opinion were universal, it would cause an intire Cessation of Business, and introduce Disorder and Misery into the Creation, contrary to the Intention of our great Creator, and therefore contrary to Truth. Whatever Weight some People may think the Objections against Christianity have; they can have little or no Weight comparatively with the Force of this Argument, which is an *indirect* Demonstration in Favour of it: *viz.* Christianity must be true, because the Supposition of its not being so, carries along with it gross and palpable Absurdities; it implies a Disbelief of every Thing of which we were not Eye-witnesses; it puts an End to the Credibility of all human Testimony, and plunges us into a State of Scepticism in Matters of Practice; far more to be avoided than that which relates to Matters of mere Theory. It supposes, that several thousands of early Christians, who could not have

SERM. have been deceived, as to the Reality of those Miracles which fell under the immediate Cognizance of their Senses, entered into a Combination to make the rest of the World believe they were thoroughly persuaded of the Truth of them and of Christianity, by persisting in it to the last, without any Interest and even against their Interest.

II.

Farther, we must distinguish between the *Proofs of a Thing*, and the *Thing said to be proved*. All Objections which relate merely to the Nature of the Thing proved, but do not affect the Proofs themselves, ought not to invalidate our Assent. For our *Assent* is built upon the *Proofs*; and, while *they* continue firm and unshaken, *it* ought to be so too; and nothing but what destroys the Force of the Arguments, by which a Thing is proved to be true, can prove it to be false. It is thus in Natural Philosophy: when once the annual Motion of the Earth round the Sun is proved, we do not alter our Opinion, because it seems highly improbable and to shock our common natural Notions, that so cumbersome and unwieldy a Body as the Earth should move some hundreds of Miles in a Minute, and some thousands in an Hour, with a Velocity unperceived by us, and yet more rapid than that of a Cannon Ball. Thus again, when it is proved that Light comes from the Sun; we do not suspect the Proof to be ill grounded, because it is inconceivable how any Body (and Light is a Body) should travel several Millions of Miles in seven or eight Minutes; that the Sun should emit every Minute as many Corpuscles, as have been sufficient to diffuse themselves throughout the whole Expanse of the visible Creation for almost
fix

six thousand Years, without any sensible Diminution of its Bulk, without impoverishing itself by such a long continued Expence of Rays. Thus several Things relating to the Spring of the Air, the Reflexion and Refraction of the Rays of Light, Magnetism, &c. are admitted to be true upon the Testimony of Experimental Philosophers, without their own personal Knowledge, by those who would have thought them not a little absurd, independently of such Testimony. In a Word, let a Man have never so romantic an Imagination, it could not enter into his Heart to believe, or into his Head to conceive those astonishing and incredible Things, which are done in the Universe by him *who only is wonderful and only doth wonderful Things*; unless his Eye had seen them, or his Reason demonstrated them, or his Ear had heard them from several Persons of great Abilities and unsuspected Credit. Whatever Absurdities some imagine they see in the Scriptures; it is the greatest Absurdity of all, that they who do not know any Thing in the Course of Nature, no not so much as the Falling of a Stone, but what baffles, confounds, and surpasses all their reasoning Powers, should refuse to believe any Thing in God's Revelation and extraordinary Dispensations, that does so. It appears then that an *Improbability* arising from the *Nature of the Thing* may be overcome and over-ruled by *direct positive Proofs*. The Reason is obvious: The *Nature of Things* is in a great measure in the Dark, their internal Constitution and Essence in a great Degree unknown, and because unknown, beset with a great many Difficulties, which, though not irreconcilable in themselves, may seem to us to be so:

SERM. so. But *the Proofs for the Reality* of the Things

II.

whose internal Nature baffles the Understanding, may lie so open to our Apprehensions; may be so clear and substantial, as justly to demand the Assent of every intelligent Person. Exceptions against the Proofs of revealed Religion ought to be seriously considered, and have been, I think, fully answered. But as long as the *Proofs* are *unexceptionable*, all other Exceptions against it are of little Force; provided they do not imply any *Impossibility* or any *Immorality*. For it is demonstrable, that we cannot fully comprehend every Thing that God may reveal, nor the whole Scheme of the Christian Dispensation; it is demonstrable, that we must be insufficient Judges of what we cannot fully comprehend; and it is demonstrable, that no great Stress is to be laid upon the Exceptions of an insufficient Judgment. But our Insufficiency, which takes off the Force of the Objections, does not annul or make void the *Proofs*; because the *Proofs* for Christianity being external are what they are, extrinsically and independently of the Nature of the Thing proved.

The Substance of what I would say is, that if there be any such Thing as proper and undoubted Certainty of Fact, there is such a moral Certainty for those Facts which support Christianity, not to mention a Variety of other substantial and concurrent Proofs. Now we cannot resist the Strength of moral Certainty, without offering a Violence to Nature, and committing a Force upon it: We do not resist it in any other Case besides *that* of Religion; and if we do it in *that*, it must be owing to some irregular Passion which hangs a wrong Bias upon us: The Man must struggle hard,

hard, and labour not to be convinced, who is not SERM.
convinced by it. There is a strong Propension, in II.
terwoven in our Frame and Constitution, to surren-
der ourselves without Reserve to such Evidence. It
seems to be the Voice of God speaking within us;
whose Intention it never could be, that his Creatures
should continue, as to Matters of Practicé, in a pen-
dulous State of Mind, quite unbalanced and ever-wa-
vering, without a Possibility of coming to a fixed Re-
solve, which they might abide by: Which yet must
have been the Case in most Affairs, if moral Certain-
ty were not allowed to be sufficient to ensure our Con-
viction. The Case is the same as to strong *Appearan-*
ces of Truth, as it is as to Miracles. It has been often
proved that God would never suffer a Train of Mira-
cles to be wrought in Favour of Falshood: He would
not suffer such a Snare to be laid for Mankind with-
out disabusing them by working those of a superior
Nature in Opposition to it. Just so by Parity of Rea-
son, we may conclude, that he would never suffer so
many bright Appearances of Truth from the Propa-
gation of the Gospel, from the Completion of Pro-
phecies, &c. to be affixed to a Forgery; he would
never suffer those Facts which gave an incontestable
Sanction to the Doctrines of Christianity (supposing it
an Imposture) to come recommended to us by as strong
Marks and Characters of Credibility, as any distant
Matter of Fact can have, and stronger than any other
has; without giving us something of superior Force,
some clear Demonstration of the Falshood of it, to
prevent us from being betrayed, which we should other-
wise inevitably be, into an Error. Supposing an infi-
nitely good Being at the Helm, he would not permit
his

SERM. his Creatures, who are designed for *Action* and not
 II. merely for *Speculation*, to be distracted with equal Ap-
 pearances of Truth in Points of the last Importance, so
 as that the Mind should hang in an even Poise between
 two Propositions. There must be some prepollent
 Evidence in all such Cases to vindicate God's Good-
 ness, and to turn the Scales. Now where there is a
 very high Degree of moral Certainty, nothing can
 preponderate or overbalance it, but absolute infallible
 Certainty. It must be consequently the Will of our
 Creator that we should acquiesce in Christianity as
 enforced by a strong Moral Certainty, if

Idly, There does not appear any *absolute Impossibility*
 in the Contexture of it—or any *strict Demonstra-*
tion that it is false, and that too in Things of Impor-

But this its most *early* and *virulent* Adversaries ne-
 ver have shewn. A demonstrative Proof that they
 could not do it: Their very Silence is a strong Ar-
 gument in Favour of its Truth; and by alledging so
 little against it, they have made it clear that they had
 nothing material to alledge. If Infidels have any
 Thing of this Nature, let them produce it; let them
 set out with some self-evident Principle, and from
 thence go on gradually with a necessary Connection
 of Ideas, till by a Chain of close Reasoning, there
 being a strict Coherence all along, they come to the
 Conclusion; or let them prove that Christianity au-
 thorizes and enjoins some gross Immorality: For it
 is a Demonstration, that a Religion which authorizes
 Immorality cannot have the Sanction of a perfectly
 pure and holy God. If they have not any Thing of
 this

this Nature, then, as I have proved before, no Difficulties or even Improbabilities ought to over-rule strong and undoubted positive Evidence: And the Reasons for Christianity are so many, clear, and forcible, that they will, and must, and ought to sway the Minds of reasonable, unprejudiced and good Men. One Demonstration, and nothing less than Demonstration, would effectually disprove it. For one Demonstration would beget infallible Certainty, and twenty Demonstrations could not do more than beget infallible Certainty, which does not admit of Degrees. The Understanding could not yield its Assent as a Volunteer. It would be pressed into the Service of Infidelity, and compelled, however reluctant, to come in. But this is a Task only fit for that adventurous Genius who pretended to have by him a Demonstration against the Being of God. At present the Deists virtually confess, they have nothing of this Sort to level against a Religion which has stood the Trial of many successive Ages, by being humbly content to take up with any plausible Plea that carries but the Face of an Argument, a kind of Hypocrisy in Argumentation, which has the mere Form and Outside of Reasoning, without the Power and Energy thereof. They have Recourse to low Evasions, false Quotations, Misrepresentations; poor artificial Props, which a firm substantial Building needs not, and a ruinous Building cannot long be supported by. They have been most loud and clamorous in the Charge of Contradictions as to the mysterious Doctrines of Christianity, and particularly that of the Trinity, pretending to nothing less than a Demonstration of the Absurdity of it. Whereas on

SERM. the other Hand there is a Demonstration, that the
 II. Doctrine of the Trinity does not imply any express
 and plain Contradiction. Because plain and express Contradictions lie as level to the Understanding as plain Truths do. Now the Doctrine of the Trinity relates to the internal Nature of the Deity, and his intrinsic Manner of Existence, what Differences it may admit of consistently with the Unity of Essence: but what relates to the internal Nature of God, to which our Faculties bear no Proportion, cannot lie level to the Understanding: his Nature must be *like the great Deep*, unfathomable by us, tho' his *Righteousness*, and Moral Attributes stand *like the strong Mountains* visible to every Eye. While they charge the Doctrine of the Trinity with a Contradiction, they are guilty of one themselves, in allowing the Divine Nature internally, as it is in itself, to be incomprehensible and far above out of their Sight, and yet pretending to see clearly what is far above out of their Sight; in pretending to discern fully and perfectly an Impossibility in the Nature of the Thing, where the only Impossibility is, that they should discern any Thing at all fully and perfectly. All the Confusion arises from not distinguishing between *Ideas of Intellect*, and *Ideas of Imagination*: Several Things may not be absolutely *unintelligible* that are yet utterly *unimaginable*, or to which no Images belong. Thus we understand (and can demonstrate what we understand) that something must have existed from all Eternity. But when the Imagination would lay hold on some Idea to represent it, it can lay hold on none, but what labours under a Complication of Absurdities: It cannot conceive any Being to exist without successive

successive Duration. Now Eternity in the Sense of successive Duration, cannot be a necessary Attribute of God ; since that cannot be necessary, no two Parts of which ever existed together. Duration past is no more, that which is to come is not yet in Being ; the present Moment only exists ; yet while we are speaking it is gone and has ceased to be. And since no Part of successive Duration can be necessary, the whole of it cannot be so. A successive, changing, and fleeting Duration cannot therefore be attributed to him, whose Existence is unchanging, permanent, and necessary ; not to mention that an infinite successive Duration implies an infinite Number of Years, an infinite Number is a last Number, a Number so great that you cannot add to it, which is a Contradiction. God's unbounded Duration cannot differ from ours merely in *Degree*, since what is infinite and unbounded admits of no Degrees : it must differ therefore in *Nature* and *Kind* ; and if so, it follows, that what would imply a Contradiction, when predicated of a finite Nature, may, in some Cases, be none with Respect to the divine ; the Contradiction being not *ad idem*. Thus for Instance it is a Contradiction to say, that *we* have not existed longer to Day, than we had Yesterday ; but it is no Contradiction as to *that* Being, *with whom a thousand Years are but as one Day, and one Day as a thousand Years*. For the Deity had existed a whole Eternity Yesterday, and can have existed no more than a whole Eternity to Day : Or in other Words, unlimited Duration cannot be lengthened or shortened ; because, what can be lengthened or shortened, enlarged or narrowed, must have Limits. It is demonstrable therefore,

SERM. that what has existed from Eternity must exist in a

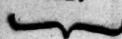
II. Manner quite different from what we do, and of
 which we can have no Ideas. And if so, what

crude indigested Notices must they entertain, who can argue, that because three separate *human* Persons are three Beings, therefore three *divine* Persons must be so too? In short the divine Nature not only infinitely transcends our Nature, it infinitely transcends our very Conceptions of it: the Deity not being only infinitely above what we are, he is infinitely above what we can think of him. If we would silence our Imagination, a delusive Faculty, and listen to the Voice of cool Reason, we should perceive no absolute Impossibility that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though distinct from each other, and subsisting in a different Manner, may be undivided; and to what is undivided and incapable of any Disunion, we may, with at least as strict Propriety of Speech, ascribe the Denomination of *one Being*, as we can to any Thing, of which we have a positive Idea, in the whole Universe.

Again, the Understanding may perceive that it implies no Contradiction, that there may be such a Relation in the divine Nature, as, according to our poor and low Ways of thinking and speaking, greatly disproportioned to the Originals which they should represent, is best shadowed out to us by that of a Son to a Father, to which it may bear some faint Resemblance. But the Imagination falls immediately to work, and ascribing it to the Deity in as strict a Sense, as when it is applied to the human Nature, forms as many absurd Conclusions, its own Workmanship, as it does, when it argues from our successive Duration to, what is infinitely different from

from it, the Duration of God. Whatever Absurdities some People may fancy upon this Subject, they have all been occasioned by this, that they have confounded Strength of *Reason*, and Strength of *Imagination*: they did not perceive any Disagreement in the Ideas themselves, Ideas of pure Understanding, they only perceived a Disagreement in the Ideas of Imagination which it borrows from created and even material Beings; whereas it is evident that no Ideas of the Imagination, none but those of pure Intellect, ought to be employed, except by Way of Figure, in describing a pure intellectual and spiritual Being. Something like this happens in the Point of God's Omnipresence. The Understanding clearly proves, that the Deity must be present to every Thing, which he made and governs. But the Imagination, ever obtruding beyond its Sphere, is impatient to bring down this Doctrine to its own Level; and not being able to conceive the Presence of any Being that is unextended, it considers the Deity under the gross Idea of infinite Extension, of infinite Length, Breadth and Height; and then a numerous Train of Contradictions break in upon us; as that Extension implies Parts; that Parts by the very Term imply Imperfection, which cannot belong to an All-perfect Being; that there must be as many distinct Consciousnesses as there are distinct Parts, and consequently an infinite Number of distinct Consciousnesses in what is infinitely extended. The only Remedy for which is, to consider, that as there is a Demonstration that there is one spiritual Being which is present, so there is a Demonstration too, that he must be present in a Manner, about which we can

SERM. imagine nothing at all; because no Imagery of a

II.  spiritual Being, or it's Presence can be drawn on the Fancy, as that of material Beings is. It is thus too as to the Trinity. Though we have Ideas of Union and Distinction, and know well enough what we mean by them, when we apply them to the Divine Nature, yet those Ideas are so defective that we cannot exactly compare them: and, where our Ideas are so defective that we cannot exactly compare them, there we cannot have an evident Perception of a Contradiction or Disagreement of Ideas, which depends entirely on a full and exact Comparison of Ideas.

Arianism seems to be divided from *Deism*, and that again from *Atheism*, by thin Partitions. The Man who is obstinate in the Disbelief of his Saviour's Godhead, must be, one would think, strongly tempted to reject the Scriptures, as a Book big with Blasphemy, since every Idea distinctive of God from his Creatures is there expressly ascribed to him; unless Paternity, a mere Relation of Order, be the distinctive Idea of God; which yet is so far from implying any Inferiority, that it proves the very Reverse. For unless *only Son* and *only begotten* should signify the *only created* (the Consequence of which would be, that our Saviour is the only Creature in the Universe) it must follow, that he is *uncreated* and of the same Nature with his Father. Well, supposing him now turned *Deist*; the Transition from thence to *Atheism* or *Scepticism* would be almost unavoidable, because, Eternity, Omnipresence, and Foreknowledge are encumbered with as great Difficulties as the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Some

Some Writers, who set out with opposing the Divinity of the Son, have at last, by a natural Gradation of Error, ended in combating the Prescience of God; and made at least very near Approaches to *Atheism*. For next to believing there is no such Thing as an infinitely perfect Being; the greatest Absurdity is to believe, there is an infinitely perfect and wise Being, who does not know, what to-morrow, nay what the next Hour may bring forth. And indeed I do not know whether the Denial of any one fundamental Truth might not, if pursued to its utmost Consequences, lead or rather mislead one, by a just Train of Deductions, to the Rejection of every other that is so.

One would undoubtedly wish for some fixed Anchor, some Haven and secure Situation, when one sees and hears of so many who have either made Shipwreck of their Faith, or are driving at the Mercy of the Wind: which can be only this: that Moral Certainty is a sufficient Ground of a full Assurance, where there appears no absolute Impossibility to overbalance it, as there does not in the Case of Christianity. The Consequence of which is,

III^{dly}, That a thinking Man may enjoy himself, with perfect Ease and Tranquillity, in the Profession and Belief of Christianity, which he could not do, if he thought upon the Stretch, in a State of Infidelity.

For he will find every comfortable Doctrine, which a good Man could wish to be true, actually proved to be so by those Arguments which demand the Assent of every wise and unprejudiced Person.

SERM. He will perceive, that there are several Points,
 II. which are necessary to be determined in Order to
 come at any tolerable Satisfaction and Repose of
 Mind, but yet are undeterminable by any internal
 Evidences from the Nature of the Thing: and he
 will perceive, that where Reason from inward Evi-
 dences fails us most, there the Scripture has been
 most express, particular and full, as if it had been
 written on Purpose to supply the Deficiencies of
 Reason, as well as authoritatively to enforce the Dis-
 coveries of it. He thinks that as God designed Man-
 kind in general should be governed by Religion, That
 Religion has the fairest Pretensions to Truth, which
 is suited to Mankind in general. Now a System of
 moral and religious Truths delivered in easy, short
 and compendious Precepts, and proved to have the
 Stamp of divine Authority upon it by a Certainty
 of Fact, is much better suited to Mankind in gene-
 ral, than what depends upon ideal and abstract Rea-
 sonings. For the Bulk of Mankind can much more
 easily apprehend the Credibility of Testimony and
 of public notorious Facts, than they can the Force
 of metaphysical Arguments drawn out to any
 Length; or judge whether Consequences, after seve-
 ral Removes from their first Principles, have all the
 Virtue and Strength of those Principles conveyed to
 them. Take away Faith and Authority, and you
 take away the very Basis, upon which Religion,
 Morality and common Honesty must stand among
 the Generality of our Species; who, though they
 may, by a due Use of common Sense, perceive a
 gross and palpable Absurdity, and therefore may
 guard against the Impositions of Popery, yet cannot
 positively

positively ascertain by the Use of their unassisted Faculties, the most necessary Truths. It is therefore an additional Comfort to a serious Christian to consider that he is acting in Concert with that Being, who wills the Happiness of all Mankind, by countenancing, encouraging and adorning that Religion, which is best adapted to the Exigencies of Mankind in general.

On the other Hand, can an inquisitive, thinking Man be perfectly serene and undisturbed, who has revolted from Christianity, and *forsoke the Guide of his Youth*? He must be very sanguine to think he can demonstrate Christianity to be certainly false. The utmost Lengths, I conceive, a cool Unbeliever, who has studied the Point, can go, is to attempt to prove, that it may not be certainly true: and if this be all, how great must his Inquietude be? And this is perhaps the only assignable Reason, why Infidels are more industrious, *compassing Sea and Land to make Profelytes*, than the Generality of Chrstians seem to be, who enjoy their Opinions and themselves, without *being instant in Season, and out of Season* to propagate them. The Truth is, a sound and rational Believer, like *a good Man*, is *satisfied in and from himself*. The Perception of Truth, it matters not whether from internal or external Evidences, gives him a genuine Complacency, and an inward Feeling that all is right within, as to the main Points of Belief. Whereas thoughtful Men who are in any pernicious Error, must look out for that Satisfaction, which they cannot feel at Home in their own Breasts, elsewhere from the Number, Countenance and Approbation of their Followers, looking upon every

new

SERM. new Convert, whom they gain, as a confirming

II. Circumstance in Favour of their Opinions. A poor and slender Confirmation ! For those very Men who are insensibly drawn into the very Depth of Wrong-thinking, would have been shocked if they had opened their whole Scheme at first. They do not attempt to pour in all their Tenets at once, lest they should fall to the Ground and be lost. They infuse them into the Mind as by a narrow Opening or Inlet, by Degrees, Drop after Drop, till they have made them to receive the most noisom Dregs of Error. *They in the Beginning set forth, their most plausible and colourable Opinions, and when Men have well drank in them, then those which are worse.* Thus Men are led from one Falshood to another, till they fall into *Fatalism*, the last Sink of poisonous Notions ; into which all gross Errors, after they have gone their utmost Lengths and run their Course, at last empty themselves.

A benevolent Man that is at Ease in himself would not designedly let a Line appear in Print, or a Word fall in Conversation, that should stagger the Good in their Way to Heaven, or confirm the Bad in a Course of Wickedness : he would not for all the World write or say any Thing, that should tend to weaken the Motives to Honesty and Virtue, by striking at the Authority of that Book, from which alone a full Assurance of unallayed, exceeding, and endless Happiness (the strongest Support of Virtue and Honesty) can be derived. Can a Man that is a Friend to Natural Religion, endeavour to subvert a Revelation, which contains all the Motives to Goodness which Natural Religion has, and adds some distinguishing

distinguishing ones of great Weight peculiar to itself? Or can he really think that Natural Religion would succeed in it's Room? No. There would be as many Schemes of Religion, as there are opinionated Men, who wanted to form a Party. And that Proposition would have very uncommon bad Fortune, which could meet with no Friends to countenance and stand up for it. Men are very well agreed that several Duties are enjoined by Christianity, who would have endless Disputes, whether they were Parts of Natural Religion or not. Reason, abstractedly from Revelation, does not prove many certain Points; and the Mind of Man finds itself disposed to believe a great many more, provided it could prove them. There will be, Christianity once set aside, a mighty Void left in it, which Reason of itself cannot fill up. *Paganism*, *Enthusiasm*, and Superstition on the one Hand; a formless undetermined Thing that calls itself *personal Religion*, *Manichæism*, *Atheism*, and *Fatalism* on the other; would be striving to erect themselves upon it's Ruins, till at last the Populace ran into Superstition in Variety of Forms, and the Gentry into no Religion at all. What has been said of the Dissolution of a well-constituted Government, is as applicable to the Dissolution of Christianity: it would resemble the Putrefaction of a dead Animal, when, instead of one noble Creature, as it was while Life held it together, there would be a thousand little nauseous Reptiles preying upon it, each crawling in a Path of its own.

An humane Person cannot reflect without deep Concern on the Impressions which are made upon an honest

SERM. honest undesigning but weak Man, when he lights
 II. upon the Books, or falls into the Company of artful
 Infidels: Where there is a good Disposition at the
 Bottom, they shall serve his Faith, just as the Rob-
 bers did the Traveller in the Parable of the *Samari-
 tan*; they shall not kill and destroy it entirely, which
 would be almost a Kindness in Comparifon, but *they
 ſhall leave it wounded and half-dead*. He ſhall have
 afterwards ſeveral uneaſy Senſations, and ungrateful
 Feelings within, before he can recover an eſtabliſhed
 Health of Soul. He ſhall go on drooping and dif-
 fident without that chearful Affurance which he had
 before, in his Journey through this World to a bet-
 ter.

But, whatever others do, let us unite our vigorous
 and animated Endeavours in eſpouſing the Cauſe and
 promoting the Interests of Chriſtianity. Let us not
 be indolent, or, like the Diſciples of old, *aſleep* while
 they are going to *crucify our Lord and Maſter*, or,
 which is one Kind of crucifying him, to root out his
 Religion from off the Face of the Earth. But *let us
 hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*,
 and confirm the Faith, that is wavering, of others by
 our Diſcourſe, by our Pens, and by (what is some-
 times the moſt effectual Confirmation of all) our
 Lives ſuitable to our holy Faith: Then *faithful will
 be he, who has promiſed* to his faithful Servants eter-
 nal Happineſs: Which God of his infinite Mercy
 grant, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

The usual Objections against Revelation,
founded in Ignorance.

In two Sermons preached before the Univerſity
of Oxford.

I COR. I. 25.

*The Fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than Men; and
the Weakneſs of God is ſtronger than Men.*

IT was no unuſual Thing among the Ancients, as SERM.
might be ſhewn by Inſtances brought from ap- III.
proved Authors, to call Things, not as they were
in *themſelves*, but as they *appeared*, or were *eſteemed*
to be by *others*. Agreeably to this Cuſtom St. Paul,
in the 28th Verſe of this Chapter, calls Things ac-
counted as nothing, *Things that are not*. And here
he ſtyles That *Fooliſhneſs* and *Weakneſs*, which was
deemed to be ſo by the *Greeks*, though it was far
otherwiſe in Reality.

The *Deiſts* have never offered any rational Scheme
or tolerable Hypotheſis, to account for all the ſtrong
Marks of Credibility and Appearances of Truth and
Divinity in Chriſtianity, ſuppoſing nothing more than
human concerned in the Publication and Propaga-
tion

SERM. tion of it; any more than the *Atheists* have advanced any plausible Scheme to solve all the Appearances of Goodness, Wisdom, and Design in the Creation, without supposing an infinitely wise and good God the Author and Preserver of it. What the *Deists* object to Christianity, is just what the *Atheists* do in Regard to the Creation; instead of producing any consistent Theory to take off these Appearances of its Divinity, they endeavour to balance them by counter Appearances; Appearances of something wrong, irregular, or amiss in the Contexture of it. They tell us, it contains several Things which could not have been in it, if it had come from God. It will not be improper therefore,

Ist, To shew, that it is owing to Ignorance, that several Things in Revelation seem liable to the Charge of Foolishness.

IIIdly, To advance a Step farther, and prove, that God has stamped the brightest Characters of Divinity on those Parts of Revelation, which are thought most exceptionable.

IIIIdly, That supposing, but not granting, there were some Inconsistencies in little incidental Matters, and Points of no Consequence; Christianity nevertheless would stand upon a firm Basis, as long as the principal Evidences for it remain unshaken, and the weightier Matters are worthy of God.

Ist, Then I am to shew, that it is owing to Ignorance, &c.

It

It has been Matter of Surprize to some, that *In- fidelity* should spread, even among Men, who are sensible and knowing in all other Respects. The Age has been complimented as a *discerning* and *inquisitive* Age; and so it may be; but certainly, generally speaking, it is not *inquisitive* into *scriptural* Learning, whatever it may be into other Branches of Literature. This seems a Province too much neglected, in Proportion as other Regions of Science have been cultivated. Yet without a sufficient Furniture of this Kind, a Person of very good Sense is by no Means qualified to sit in Judgment upon the *Bible*. The Truth of the Matter is, Men must either be content to rest in *Generals*, I mean, the Evidences of Revelation, and the Reasonableness of it, as to the main Substance and Design of it, as the middling Part of Mankind most commonly do: Or, if they will enter into Particulars, they should do, what too many of them do not, enter into them thoroughly with all proper Helps, and sift Things to the Bottom with an Attention proportioned to the Importance of the Subject. I will not deny, that some Men of Abilities may have done this, and yet continue *Infidels* still: But this I will venture to say, there are not more Men of this Stamp, than there were in the last Age of those, who, though incredulous in every other Respect, were firm Believers in *judicial Astrology*: They are not more in Number, than there are Searchers after the *Philosopher's Stone* and *perpetual Motion*. If the Light of the Gospel be lost to any one, after due Care and Application, it is lost commonly upon dark, unhappy, and involved Souls; which smother the

SERM.
III.

SERM. the Evidences, that support, enliven, and invigorate
 III. every good Christian. I would not, however, pass
 } too general and undistinguishing a Censure; great
 Allowances are to be made in many Cases, and especially for those, who have been early tinctured with *Infidelity*, through the Default of their Education. Poisonous Notions may be instilled, or get Admittance into the ductile and tender Mind, as little Insects do into Amber, before it has that Firmness, Solidity, and Consistency, which is necessary to hinder them from insinuating themselves: And like them too, when they have got into it, they cannot, without much Difficulty, be removed. The Mind hardens and retains them after, as so many Proofs, that it was once weak, unstable, and unresisting as Water.

Let us suppose a Person of fine natural Parts, not a little improved by polite Reading, by an enlarged Conversation, and by his great Knowledge of the World. But then it is of the World, as it is at present; for he may know no more of it as past long ago, than he does of that which is to come. How easily may he, notwithstanding his Abilities, be tempted to *Infidelity*; if, when he looks into his Bible, instead of considering that he is, in some Parts of it, stepping back into the very remotest Scenes of Antiquity, and travelling, as it were, into another World, quite different from this; he sits down and tries (no Wonder he condemns) Authors, who were born and bred in another Age and Country, by Laws, to which they were utter Strangers, the Laws of Writing which obtain at present in our Country? How
 natural

natural will it be for him, in the Fulness of his Sufficiency, to treat with Contempt such Passages as this: *Moab is my Waspspot, over Edom will I cast out my Shoe*; and to ask, with a supercilious and decisive Air, whether a Person, assisted by the Divine Spirit, could write in such an homely and coarse Manner? But his Contempt for this, and many other Places of Scripture, would abate, if he would study the Nature and early Use of *Hieroglyphics*, which gave a Tincture to the Conversation and Writings of those Times: So that a *Waspspot*, which was used as a significant *Characteristic Mark*, became, when Letters more generally supplied the Use of Symbols, a *Characteristic Appellation*, to denote a Nation reduced to the most abject State, and employed in the most contemptible Offices. And as for *Casting out the Shoe*, he might find Reason to think, that, as some have observed, That was the ancient Form of taking Possession of any Country, or even Piece of Ground, in Allusion to that of *Moses*: *Every Place, on which the Soles of your Feet shall tread, shall be yours*. Or perhaps, *casting out the Shoe*, might only signify shaking off the Dust of one's Feet, as an Indication of that Neglect and Contempt which the *Edomites* deserved. No Wonder some should cavil at the *Propbetical* Schemes of Speech as strange and ridiculous, when a celebrated *Roman Historian* * could ascribe those pompous Titles to the absurd Pride of the *Persian King*, which we may, with some Probability, suppose were authorised by the common Language of the *Oriental*s, and

* Ammianus Marcellinus.

SERM. took their Birth from *hieroglyphic* Imagery, viz. *

III. "*Sapores*, Brother to the Sun and Moon, and Rela-

"tion to the Stars, to his Brother *Constantius Cæ-*
 "*ſar*:" It being no more unusual, or out of the
 Way, for the Eastern People to characterize the
 Heads of a Nation, nay even of a private Family
 (as appears by *Jacob's* Interpretation of *Joſeph's*
 Dream) by the Sun and Moon, and the Nobility by
 the Stars; than it would be now to call a late emi-
 nent Writer the Light of the Philosophical World.
 And Authors must conform to the Laws of Composi-
 tion then in Being; otherwise they will be as short-
 lived, as Authors; as those Subjects, who will act
 in Opposition to the Statutes and Edicts then in
 Force. Nay we often, through our Ignorance, ima-
 gine we descry a Blemish, which, upon maturer
 Consideration, proves to be a considerable Beauty
 and Elegance of Diction. Thus, *Destroy this Temple,*
and in three Days I will raise it up, has been thought
 by some to be a ridiculous and affected Way of
 speaking; and it might perhaps be so in any other
 Person; but in our blessed Saviour it is perfectly
 just, and in Character. His Body being the very
 Temple, of which the other was only a Type, the
 very Temple, in which the *Shechinah*, or Divine
 Presence, tabernacled; the Temple, in which the
 Fulness of the Godhead dwelt substantially.

If we will not be at the Pains to consider the Na-
 ture and End of the *Mosaic Dispensation*, several
 Laws must appear *unworthy* of God, which are yet
really suitable to his unerring Wisdom, as being ne-

* *Rex Regum Sapores particeps Siderum, Frater Solis & Lunæ,
 Constantio Cæsari Fratri meo Salutem.*

ecessary Preservatives against Idolatry (the Parent of Immorality) by the Prohibition of idolatrous Rites, which might mislead them into it. Thus, however trifling this Law might seem, *viz. The Woman shall not wear that which appertaineth to the Man, neither shall a Man put on a Woman's Garment*, for all that do so are an Abomination unto the Lord thy God; it appears, in this Light, perfectly; it being a Custom among the Heathen, as we learn from *Macrobius* *, for the Men to worship *Venus* in Women's Habits, and Women in those of Men. Besides those Ceremonies which are *Emblematical*, and have an inward and spiritual Meaning, according to the early Method of conveying Instruction under the Veil of Types and Symbols; other Laws might be highly requisite, at that Juncture, to make it impracticable for the *Jews* even to eat with the *Gentiles*, whose idolatrous Ways they were too apt to learn: Laws forbidding them several Kinds of Food, which were allowed to the rest of the World, that so any Intercourse, which might expose them to Contagion, should be cut off. Folly, ductile as Water, flows in no unalterable Channel; but changes it's Course, and runs in new *Meanders*, as the Humour and Fancy of Leading Men, in several Ages, turn and direct it. Hence several Prohibitions, intended to guard against some Absurdity, then predominant in the neighbouring Nations, seem not a little ridiculous now, when the *Memorial* of those Follies is *perished with them*. Some of the *Jewish* Laws are, in

* *Philcorus* quoque in Attide eandem (Venerem) affirmat esse Lunam, & ei Sacrificium facere Viros cum veste Muliebri, Mulieres cum virili; quod eadem & Mas æstimatur & Fœmina. *Macrobi. Saturn. L. III. c. VIII.*

SERM. some Measure, unaccountable to us, for the same

III. Reason that *Satyr* is more hard to be understood by After-ages, than any *other* kind of Writing: Because *other* kinds of Writings are upon Subjects of a more fixed and unchanging Nature. But *Satyr* dwells upon the Modes, Humours, vicious and ridiculous Customs, which prevailed when the Author wrote; Things very variable and changeable; in which Folly is ever shifting the Scene, and taking new Determinations. Unless the Follies of the present Age should be, some Way or other, conveyed to future Times, some of the most admired Writers at present, will appear to Posterity in a very odd Light, as to those Passages in which they expose the Fashions of Dress and Diversions: Nor can any Thing screen them from Censure, but what ought, for the same Reason, to exempt the sacred Writers, that a Vein of good Sense runs through every other Part; and the same Hands, which composed some Parts, being equally concerned in all, it ought to be presumed, that it extends likewise to those Passages, which lie under the Disadvantage of referring to Things now no longer known. We are thoroughly reconciled to Folly, as at present modified, which we see and hear of every Day; but can have no Notion of it, as it subsists under quite different Modifications, unless the Memory of it be preserved. And when we can have no Notion of the Folly, we can have none of those Laws which fenced against it; but are apt to censure them as arbitrary, capricious, and whimsical. Let a Man consider what exalted Ideas *Moses* every where inculcates of the *Deity*, and of the Worship due to Him: Let him read *Joseph's* Interview with his

his Brethren; and the Book of *Deuteronomy*, where SERM.
the Spirit of the *Law-giver*, and the *Father* of his III.
People, breathes in every Page; and then let him
consider, whether it be not very possible, that *Moses*
may have said many Things, which, through
Length of Time, may be *unintelligible*; but utterly
impossible, that so great a Writer could say any
Thing grossly and palpably *absurd*.

The Misfortune is, People sit down to read such
ancient Books as the Scriptures, with Heads full of
modern Customs and Ideas: And whatever they
cannot adjust to them, they, through Narrowness of
Soul, reject with Scorn, as highly improper. And
thus it comes to pass, (agreeable to an Observation
that has been made) that often, when the Objectors
to Revelation think that the sacred Writers *nod*, it is
only they themselves that *dream*. Difficulties, like Sha-
dows, lengthen in Proportion as we are farther re-
moved from the Light of Antiquity; which, if it
shone directly and immediately upon us, would va-
nish. Supposing a Revelation originally given to
Persons of a different Age, Genius, and Language,
it must be expected of Course, that there should be
in it several Idioms and Peculiarities of Style, as re-
mote, as the Time and Country, from ours; several
Allusions to Usages, then well known, but now for-
gotten. And what *must be*, upon the Supposal of
a Revelation then given, can certainly be no Ob-
jection or Proof, that it was not then given. It
would have been as much Enthusiasm for the *Pro-*
phets, to have declined the usual Methods of con-
veying their Meaning, whether by significant Ac-
tions, Parables, or any other Way suited to the Ge-

SERM. nius of those early Ages; as it would be *now* to re-

III. *vive* them, when they are quite out of Date. Custom is always the Standard of Language: And that alone is *proper*, which is authorised by it, and the general Consent; that alone *improper*, which deviates from it. No Doubt, several Forms of Expression may seem uncouth and absurd, merely because they are not familiarized to us; as, on the other Hand, scarce any thing seems *so*, which has been made familiar to us from our Infancy. No Doubt, there may be in the Scriptures some Images, in Appearance to us, too *bold* and *daring*; they are Plants of a hotter Soil, which will not bear to be transplanted into a Climate so unkindly as ours. But such was the *Habit* of Writing, which then prevailed. *Our* Manner of Composition, however correct and accurate, would have seemed to them *flat* and *unanimated*; like Marble, very smooth and polished, but very cold; and which, instead of begetting a kindly Warmth in the Breast, would strike a chilly Damp into it. It is the Ill-breeding of the Vulgar among Criticks, to laugh at any thing Out-landish in the Dress of foreign, but sacred Writers: Especially when there are plain Proofs, that the Body of Revelation, whatever the Cloathing of it may be, is *fearfully and wonderfully made* by the wise Author of all Things, and in *his Book are all the Members of it written*. After all, were we no more interested in the Contents of the *Bible*, than we are in those of a *favourite Classic*, we should esteem it as, what it is, the noblest Composition that ever was penned. There would be acknowledged to be in it, as in the Works of Nature, something grand, august, and magnificent;

magnificent; and (however irregular some Things may seem) far preferable to the correcter Elegances of Art, and the confined Exactness of a regular Work. The only Consideration, that makes us fond of every little Cavil, and willing, at any Rate, to depreciate it, is, what ought in Reason to recommend it most of all, that it's *Contents* are obligatory upon us. Setting this Consideration aside, we should make necessary Allowances for the Loss of proper Keys, at this Distance, to unlock Difficulties; and condemn that Man, as an ill-natured Critic, who, when there is a *Cup in the Hands* of the Authors, and *they pour out of the same* those cordial Drops, which *strengthen every good Man's Heart*, is eager to find and suck out any Dregs or Sediments mixed with them; any exceptionable Part, any Inaccuracy or Impropriety. It would be owned, that every Person, that read them, was the better for them. They would be universally applauded as *ancient Authors*, if they were *but Authors*: The Consideration that they are likewise Prophets, Apostles, and Law-givers to us, flattens our Relish for them. There are a thousand shining Passages, which, if they had originally grown in the Gardens of *Plato*, or *Cicero*, would have been thought the most generous Plants, that any Soil is capable of producing. Unhappily for them, our *heavenly Father* hath planted them, and commanded us to eat of them, and live for ever. How admirable, in those aforementioned Writers, would have seemed the indirect Manner of suggesting Knowledge under the Veil of *Parables* and *Allegories*; that *useful*, but otherwise *offensive*, Truth might enter, as it were, by a By-path into

SERM. the Understanding, when all the direct Avenues
 III. were shut up against it as an Enemy! How would
 those strong Paintings have been extolled, the least
 Praise of which is their Beauty! Their chief Com-
 mendation is, that their Beauty is made subservient
 to nobler Purposes; and that while they entertain
 the Fancy with agreeable Imagery, they convey to
 us the most beneficial Sentiments, and impress them
 more deeply upon the Mind: Like Blossoms, which,
 though they seem to be made only to please the Eye,
 are necessary for the Production of Fruit, and the
 Preservation of the Seed; Nature concealing, as it
 were, it's grand End, appearing intent to beautify
 the Creation, at the same Time it is benefiting it.

It would be easy to multiply Instances to make it
 appear, that those Objections, which are looked up-
 on as the Result of a superior Sagacity and Discern-
 ment, are, in Reality, the Effect of a profound Ig-
 norance of *sacred*, and sometimes of *profane*, *Anti-*
quity. One scarce indeed knows, what some People
 deem Objections. Trifles, light as Air, often *tried*
in the Balance, and *found wanting*, sink as deeply in
 unfurnished Minds, and make as much Impression
 there, as Difficulties of a weightier Nature; like
 Feathers descending in a Void with a Force and Ve-
 locity equal to that of much more substantial and
 massy Bodies. From this Set of Men you conti-
 nually hear the stale Objection of *David's* being a
Man after God's own Heart; And so he might be
 comparatively with *Saul*, as to his *public Character*,
 in answering all the Purposes (the Meaning of the
 Phrase, *after God's own Heart*) which the Deity had
 in vesting him with Kingly Power, by beating down
 Idolatry,

Idolatry, and promoting true Religion, which was SERM.
the sole End of the *Jewish* Polity. Or he might be III.
so, even as to his *private Character*, though not in
Respect of the Crime he committed; yet in Respect
of the Severity of his Repentance, which bore Pro-
portion to the Enormity of his Crime, and reinstated
him in God's Favour; not to mention his prevailing
good Qualities, and the main Tenour of his Life. I
would not dissemble, however, that Revelation, as
all other Things, has it's dark, as well as bright
Side; is a Mixture of Light and Darkness; and
that, as God has been pleased to give bright and il-
lustrious Indications of it's Divinity to those that seek
after Truth with all their Soul and with all their
Strength, he has turned the Pillar of the Cloud to
the disingenuous and perverse. Notwithstanding,
though the *Matter* of our Faith be dark or myste-
rious, yet the *formal Reason* of it is *not so*. Where-
as Facts imperfectly related in a summary View,
without descending to Particulars, and therefore
liable to Objections; mysterious Doctrines; the
unfathomable Dispensations of Providence; Ob-
scurities occasioned by Forms of speaking widely
different from ours; Accounts of the invisible
World, and of the Offices of evil Angels; these, and
many other Things, of which we know little or
nothing, and therefore cannot affirm or deny any
Thing with Certainty, are the *formal Reasons* of *In-*
fidelity. To these Men of this Stamp retreat, as to
Haunts impervious to the Beams of the Sun, when
we would set before them the Brightness of that
Light, which arose with *Healing in it's Wings*.

SERM.

III.

The Difference between a *Christian* and a *Deist* does not consist in this, that the one assents to nothing but what is *evident*; the latter assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves*. But here the Distinction lies; the *Deist* assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves*, without any *Ground* or *Reason* at all; the *Christian* assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves* upon the *Authority* of *God*. Thus the *Deist* believes there is only *One* Solitary Person in the Divine Nature; the *Christian*, that there are *Three*: both Propositions *inevident* in *themselves*: And he, who affirms the *former*, no more perceives any necessary Agreement of Ideas, than he who maintains the latter. Nor is there any plausible Plea, that can be offered for a *Singleness* of *Person*, but that exploded one of a foreign Philosopher, *viz.* *whatever is, there is a sufficient Reason appearing to us, why it is, rather than why it is not.* And an ingenious Stirrer up of Doubts might raise as many Cavils against the solitary *Unity* of *Person* in an *Essence* *every where present*, as an *Antitrinitarian* can do against a *Trinity* of *Subsistences*. The Truth is, both these Doctrines are *equally incomprehensible*: And he who rejects a *Trinity*, resigns his Understanding to a Proposition, of which he has neither *intrinsic* nor *extrinsic* Proofs; he who admits it, believes it upon the only Proofs, that the Nature of the Thing admits of, or our Nature requires, *Extrinsic ones*. The Evidence for Christianity preponderates the Objections, for this plain Reason: because most, if not all, the principal Objections turn upon Points, of which we are *incompetent* Judges. But we are able to have a *perfect* Knowledge, and form an *adequate* Judgment,

Judgment, of the *Evidence* on which Christianity stands. Though therefore we ought to abide by our Judgment where it is sufficiently informed ; we ought to lay no great Weight upon it, where it is insufficient and unequal to the Things to be judged of. We have no Right to judge where we have not a competent Ability to judge. For the Right of Judgment cannot extend beyond our Ability of judging.

Supposing it had pleased the Deity, before Glasses were invented, or Experiments made, to have given us a System of *Natural Philosophy*, together with that of Religion, containing all the modern Discoveries ; what an ample Field of Ridicule would have been opened to *little Wits* ? *That Three Divine Persons, however distinct, should be so united, as no other Persons are, or can be ; and therefore should be, not so many Beings as Persons, but one Being only,* would have afforded but little Matter of Raillery : But that Millions of Animalcules, which have Parts correspondent to Creatures of much larger Dimensions, should subsist together in one little Drop of Water, would have appeared as ridiculous an Absurdity, as that of ten thousand Spirits being at once upon a minute, and barely visible Point of Matter. That *Balaam's Ass* should speak, would have supplied them, comparatively, with no great Fund of Pleasantry ; since a Cause is assigned more than equal to the Effect, and there was an *End* worthy of that Cause, viz. to let the Prophet know, in Conformity to the Custom of that Age (which was, not only to notify one's Meaning in mere Words, but to exemplify it by some striking

SERM. striking Instance or Matter of Fact) that his Inten-
 III. tion to speak otherwise than God directed, would
 be of no Avail. For He, who could actuate the
 Tongue of the dumb Animal, and make it utter
 what articulate Sounds he pleased, could also over-
 rule the Madness of the Prophet, and deprive him
 of any Power of *going beyond the Word of the Lord,*
 or *saying more or less* than he should order him. But
 that the Body of Light should travel one hundred
 and fourscore thousands of Miles in the Second of
 a Minute, as the modern Philosophers assert, would
 have appeared to them an absolute Contradiction ;
 as it supposed, they would say, the same Body to
 be in several Places of a prodigious Distance almost
 at the same Instant. How would they have been
*astonished to bear, what yet has been demonstrated **,
 that ten thousand two hundred and fifty six Moun-
 tains (every one of which is equal to the highest
 Mountain in the Earth) do not contain so many
 Grains of Sand, as one Grain of such Sand does
 Particles of the Blood or Juices of certain Animal-
 cules : or, that the smallest Portion of Matter that
 can be assigned might diffuse itself over the am-
 plest Extent of Space, and fill it so, that there
 should be no Vacancy left but what was less than
 any given Quantity ? The *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*
 would not have diverted themselves with the *Apostle*,
 for bringing *strange Things to their Ears*, when he
 told them of the *Resurrection*. All their Merri-
 ment would have been exhausted upon much stran-

* See Keillii *Introductio ad Physicam*, Pag. 52. 56.

ger, if he had laid open to them the Secrets of Nature, — the seemingly Magical Operations of the *Loadstone*; — that all the essential Parts of an Animal, however large, are at first folded up in a little Speck scarce discernible, and that its Growth is nothing but the Unfolding and Expansion of those Parts which were contracted before; — The Art of restoring a Body to its former State, when it has been altered by Calcination or Diffolution; — that the Sun acts through a vast intermediate Void, where it *is not*; — that the Rays of its Light are reflected from a Surface which they *never touched*, &c. One would go upon very sure Grounds, before one pronounces peremptorily, such Things are absurd, contradictory, and cannot possibly be in a Divine Revelation: Experience teaching us, that several Things in the World actually *do* exist in such a Manner, as we, antecedently to Experience, should have judged impossible in the Nature of the Thing. What is there, for Instance, incredible in our Saviour's Miraculous Birth? Supposing us ignorant of the natural Method of Generation, we should think it as surprizing and incredible to the full, that a Child should be produced jointly by a Male and Female, as that it should be produced by a Female only: Nor can this be more inconceivable that the Formation of the First Man without any Parents at all.

Thus far I have gone, intending, at another Opportunity, to prosecute this Subject much farther; as being sensible, the great Secret of spreading Infidelity consists in unsettling Men's Minds, by raising

SERM.
III.

SERM. sing Doubts and Cavils about the Style and inward

III. Contents of Revelation. These are the Intricacies

with which they beset us; the Thorns and Briars, of which unless the Ground be effectually cleared, whatever good Seed or Principles may be sown in it, they will spring up with them, choke and render them unfruitful.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

The usual Objections against Revelation,
founded in Ignorance.

In Two Sermons preached before the University
of Oxford.

I COR. I. 25.

*The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men ; and
the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.*

SERM.
IV.

HAVING in a former Discourse shewn,
Ist, That it is owing to Ignorance, that
several Things in Revelation seem liable to the Charge
of Foolishness ; I now proceed,

IIly, To prove, that God hath stamped the
brightest Characters of Divinity on some Parts of
the Revelation, which are thought most exceptionable.

The Almighty seems to have observed the same
Design in constructing the Body of Revelation, as
he has in the Body Natural ; that is, to bestow the
more abundant adventitious Comeliness on the Mem-
bers of it, which seem to have no Comeliness in
themselves.

Thus, for Example, the Accounts of frequent
Appearances of God or his Angels to Men in the
earliest Ages (sometimes upon Occasions seemingly
not very extraordinary) have been thought as incre-
dible

SERM. dible as so many *Legendary Tales*; and we are asked,

IV. if we could digest so much of the *Marvellous* in any other Book? God, however, would not lay the First of Mankind under a Necessity either of having no Religion, or of erring in the grand and fundamental Articles of it: which must unavoidably have been the Case, without frequent Intercourses with Heaven, and Assistances from thence; they, unpractised in the Arts of Reasoning, and unfurnished with Materials for it, being utterly unable to reason out a System of true Religion, or even to prove the Unity of God. Reason, in the Infancy of the World, was not capable of *going alone*, and therefore most probably was *led* by the Hand; guided and supported by the great Parent of all Things. How could it be expected, that a Set of recent Mortals, wholly employed in the necessary Accommodations of Life, having few Ideas, and not Leisure to acquire more, should raise their Minds above sensible Impressions to the Discovery of *one Invisible Supreme Being*, and of the Worship due to him only? when of two such Men as *Julian* and *Celsus*, who enjoyed the Advantages of the Observations and Reasonings of all preceding Ages, one of them * could invoke the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and the other † make the following Objection to the *Jewish Religion*: “Those stupid Shepherds” (says this great Master of Reason) “and Herdsmen, following *Moses* as “their Leader, and being imposed upon by his “unpolish’d Frauds, were induced to believe “(wonderful Stupidity!) that there was *only*

* *Julianus ad Regem Solem, Orat. IV.*

† *Celsus apud Origenem, Pag. 17, 18. Ed. Cantab.*

“one God?” Thus what is thought an *Objection*, SERM.
turns out an illustrious *Proof* for the Truth of Re- IV.
velation. Here is a Matter of Fact, for which there

is Historical Evidence, that there was, in the early Ages of the World, a Religion, plain, simple, and true, as far as it went. Frequent Intercourses with the Deity, and Messages from Heaven, give an easy and satisfactory Solution of this Fact, of which no other possible Solution can be given. How ever extraordinary a Thing the Introduction of the Deity may be upon the Drama of Nature; here it is absolutely necessary to unravel the Difficulty. I might observe further, that no other Reason but this can be given, why the *Jews* alone should adhere to the Worship of one God, and be a standing Testimony against *Idolatry* amidst an idolatrous World. Repeated Interpositions of the Deity being to them, what Improvements in every Branch of Literature are to us; enabling us to demonstrate the Being, Attributes, and Providence of God, and the Homage due to Him: So that even *Natural Religion* could not have been introduced into the World, and preserved in it, without *supernatural* Instruction.

Thus again, however astonishing a Matter of Fact the Deluge may appear to be; it must be admitted as such, because it is as well attested as any Thing in Antiquity: And whoever admits this Instance of God's Displeasure, which involved the Innocent as well as Guilty in one promiscuous Doom; cannot, with any Colour of Reason, object to the utter *Excision of the idolatrous Nations* (when they had filled up the Measure of their Iniquities) by his Command who could, and would, in another World make a Difference

SERM. rence between the unoffending Person and the pre-
IV. sumptuous Sinner.

Thus again some Parts of the *Jewish* Law prove themselves, and shine with an original unborrowed Evidence, as those relating to the *Sabbatical Year*; the *Ascent of all the Males to the Temple of Jerusalem three times a Year*; against multiplying Chariots, &c. they being such, as no wise Lawgiver would enact, nor any Nation submit to, without an absolute Certainty of a Standing Divine Interposition: And whatever *intrinsic* Brightness these are attended with, they diffuse it over the whole Body of the Law.

Again, nothing hath furnished an ampler Handle for Exceptions, than those Ways which the *Prophets* made use of to notify the Will of God; as if they denoted a *frantic Turn* of Mind. Now the exact and punctual Correspondency between the Prophecy and the subsequent Events, plainly proves that *God spoke by the Mouth of his Prophets*; and it is demonstrable, that those, whose Writings are inspired by God, cannot, in those Writings, be guilty of an Absurdity. But there is no Demonstration that those Schemes of Discourse, which the Prophets used, carried any Indications of Frenzy. It being the only Indication of Frenzy, in Modes of Expression and Dress, *not* to fall in with received Customs, as far as they are innocent. It was customary among the Orientals (and among other Nations too, as appears from the old Way of ratifying Leagues and Covenants, from the Act of the *Phœœans* (to which *Horace* * alludes

* Hor. Lib. Epodôn, Od. XVI. v. 25. 26.

Sed juremus in hæc; simul imis saxa renarint
Vadis levata, ne redire sit nefas.

in his *Epodes*, and even from *Pilate's* washing his Hands) to communicate their Sentiments by Typical Signs and Symbolical Representations, in order to impress them with more Energy. They used to speak to the Eyes, by Actions expressive of their Meaning. Absurdity is either, what is so in *itself*, something that contradicts a confessed Principle or Conclusion of Reason, and this is unchangeably the same at all Times and Places : Or it is what is *relatively* so in Regard to Time, Place and Person. In the latter Sense it is of no fixed Nature but an arbitrary Term ; That being absurd in some Circumstances, which would be very proper, if Things were differently circumstanced. As for Absurdities of the former Kind, I know not any Thing in the Emblematical Actions of the *Prophets* that carries the least Appearance of Sin or Immorality, except that of *Hosea's taking a Wife of Whoredoms* ; which, though but an Appearance, is obviated, if we consider the promiscuous Use of the *Imperative* and *Future* in the *Hebrew* Tongue. For the Words may be rendered, not, *Take thee a Wife, &c.* but, *Thou wilt take a Wife* ; a Prediction, not a Command : And the Sense may be, “ I foresee, that in so corrupt and degenerate an Age thou wilt chuse a Woman who will prove unfaithful to her conjugal Vow.” And as for Absurdities of the latter Kind, let it be considered ; that however untoward an Aspect these Modes of Converse and Vehicles of Sense may now have ; if they were accommodated to the Taste of the Eastern Nations, they were worthy of those who were singular in nothing but Goodness, and wished they were not singular even in that,

SERM. complying with their Countrymen in every Thing,
 IV. their Sins only excepted; and resisting unto Death,
 rather than comply in those. Several Customs,
 which now universally prevail, would seem quite as
 absurd, were we in another Point of View. But as
 in a Vessel, where all Things move alike, nothing
 seems to move at all: So where every one complies
 with something irreconcilable to the strict Rigour
 of Reason, it seems as if none did so. In a Word,
 the Arguments for the Inspiration of the Prophets
 are founded on good Sense, which is the *same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever*: But the Objections against
 them, are only Objections against the Age in which
 they wrote, and to which they adapted their Dis-
 courses; mere Prejudices of our Time and Coun-
 try.

Those Truths do not affect us most, which obvi-
 ously and immediately appear to be such. We are
 then most pleased when we are agreeably undeceived
 in finding something, which bore a Resemblance of
 Error, turn out, upon a stricter Scrutiny, a manifest
 Truth. And how many surprising Truths have
 been discovered, which once looked like Impossibi-
 lities? Some formerly conceived it absolutely im-
 possible, that *Noah's Ark* should contain all the
 Creatures necessary to replenish the Earth. But now
 the Capacity of it to this Purpose hath been even
 demonstrated, and Infidelity is for ever silenced on
 that Head. And when so many Stumbling-blocks
 have been removed by the Sagacity of former Times,
 this would incline one to think that those Intricacies,
 which remain, may, in Process of Time, receive a
 satisfactory Solution. The more wonderful and asto-
 nishing

nishing any Thing in the *Bible* is; the more likely one would think it is, that it should be true: Because it more evidently bears the Signature and Impress of Him who only is *wonderful, and only doeth wonderful and astonishing Things*, and doeth nothing but what is so. Why should we expect, when every Atom in the *Creation* is big with Wonders, confounding our reasoning Powers and inexplicable to Man, that *Revelation* should be entirely free from every Thing of that Nature? But whatever strange Things some may suppose the Christian Religion to contain; it would be much stranger than all of them put together, that, though Man was designed by God to be a *religious* as well as *social* Creature, no true Religion was any where professed from the Beginning of the World to the present Times: which yet must be the Case, if Christianity be not true. For Christianity hath, at least, every Signature of Truth stamped upon it, with which any other Religion, supposed to be true, be it the *Patriarchal* or *Jewish*, comes recommended to us. So that if we discard Christianity, we must take away along with it every other Religion that can make any rational Pretensions to Divinity. As for Natural Religion, it never was professed or established any where, pure and unmixed; nor is it calculated for Men in active Life, to whom the Restraints of Religion are most necessary. Such Men might say, "We cannot satisfy ourselves with abstract Notions of God's Mercy in general, which leave us undetermined how far it may extend, as directed by infinite Wisdom: We want to have Mercy particularized, or reduced to our particular Case. If indeed a

SERM. " Person rose from the Dead and ascended into Hea-

IV. " ven, we could easily, on his authentic Declarati-
 " on, believe that he came down from Heaven to
 " save Sinners. This would be Mercy, not in Idea
 " only ; it would be Mercy realized in Matter of
 " Fact. It would not be an airy, fleeting, unsub-
 " stantial Notion of which our grosser Understand-
 " ings could lay no Hold ; it would be Mercy sub-
 " stantiated and embodied ; descending from above,
 " that it might conduct us thither."

It is allowed in Philosophy, that a Course of repeated Experiments is of more Weight to confirm any Theory, than all the abstracted Reasonings that can be invented, independently on them : Just so in Divinity ; those Hopes that are grounded on a Course of miraculous Facts (a Kind of Experiments performed by an Almighty Hand) are much better supported than any built on mere Speculation. The Mind is got too high on the Wing, and can find Nothing to rest upon in those airy Regions, in which it is soaring. Supposing, as some have supposed, the Præ-existence of our Souls ; and that they speculated then, as we do now, from the Wisdom and Goodness of God ; how natural would it be for them, before they were embodied, to draw a fine Picture of this World, to which the Original had no Likeness ? How unlikely that they should expect to go through such a Scene of Ignorance, Misery and moral Imperfection as there really is in it ; where Happiness, like the Sun, is generally within our View but never within our Reach ? Now setting Revelation aside, why might not we as well be deceived by mere Speculation with Regard to a future World, and our Allotment of Happiness

Happiness there ; as we should certainly have been in SERM.
 Regard to this, had our Souls reasoned in a State præ- IV.
 existent to it ? We must, without the Help of Scrip-
 ture, form a future World of our own Imagination,
 to which, as in itself, it may bear no more Corres-
 pondence, than the World of a foreign Philosopher
 did to that of Nature. Nor must we expect that
 God's Creation or Revelation should exactly coincide
 with the Creatures of our own Fancy.

The best Arguments to prove God the *natural* Go-
 vernor of the Universe, are brought from the Uni-
 verse itself : But the best Arguments to prove him
 the *moral* Governor of it (without which it will be of
 little Avail to prove him the natural Governor) are
 perhaps deducible from Scripture ; the only original
 Book that considers the World as God's World ; as
 under his extraordinary Providence. If we look back-
 ward to the Creation, we find a gradual Discovery of
 God's Will, and a whole Succession of Prophecies,
 some darker, some clearer, all pointing to, and cen-
 tering in, the grand and ultimate Event of the Re-
 demption, to which several intermediate ones refer.
 Add to this those of a distinct Nature, concerning
 the Downfal of certain flourishing Kingdoms, States
 and Cities, all circumstantially foretold and exactly
 accomplished. And if we look forward from that
 Æra, we must observe a long continued Chain of Pre-
 dictions beyond the Reach of human Knowledge ;
 such as those relating to the Propagation and Conti-
 nuation of Christianity to the End of the World ; the
 Reign of Antichrist ; the Dispersion and Restoration
 of the *Jews* ; when *all Kingdoms shall become the Lord's*
Kingdom, and all his Enemies be put under his Feet :

SERM. Several of which being already fulfilled, give us abundant Reason to expect, that the rest will, in due time, receive their Completion. And, whoever attentively

IV.

weighs the *Internal* Evidences, will perceive they outweigh the Objections from the *Internal* Contexture of Revelation; to which if the *External* Proofs be added, the Scale turns with a vast Preponderancy in Favour of Christianity. It is a stupendous, complicated Scheme, and such as could never have entered into the Head of uninspired Man; beginning from Eternity, carried on with great Uniformity, and ending only where all Things are lost, as to our Knowledge, in Eternity. Whatever Exceptions may be raised against this or that Prophecy; it appears upon the whole, that none could have formed, and thus far executed, so uniform a Plan reaching throughout all Ages, but that Being alone whose Views extend throughout all Ages, *from Everlasting to Everlasting*. And could we take in the whole Compass of Providence from first to last, tracing each Link of the Chain; we might find there was not only a Consistency, there was even a Connection between all revealed Truths. Truth, like a large Diamond, would be most beautiful could it be had by us unbroken; each Part lending a Lustre to its neighbouring Parts, and receiving it back from them; and all of them conspiring in a social Union to brighten and ennoble the whole. But such is the Poverty of our Understanding, that not being able to be at a sufficient Expence of Thought to purchase it whole and undivided; we are forced to content ourselves with some disjointed and independent Parts of it. But,

III^dly,

III^{dly}, Let us suppose there are some Things not SERM.
IV.
strictly reconcileable to Reason, and some Inconsistencies in little incidental Matters and Points of no Consequence: Christianity, nevertheless, stands upon a firm Basis, as long as the principal Evidences for it remain unshaken, and the weightier Matters are worthy of God.

All seeming Contradictions as to Historical Accounts, minute Circumstances of Facts, and other incidental Passages, have been reconciled with a Clearness really surprising; and much more than could be reasonably expected as to Books written at such a Distance of Time; when several Records, which threw Light into these Matters, are entirely lost. But supposing this had not, or could not, be done; let it be considered, that it was not God's Design in giving a Revelation, to secure his Creatures from every Error however insignificant; but to secure them, if not wanting to themselves, from Errors of a moral and religious Nature. God's Goodness, in publishing his Will, only obliged him to inspire the Writers so far, as to answer all the valuable Purposes of publishing his Will. Which is effectually done by giving us, what we have in the Scriptures, a full, unerring System of moral and religious Doctrines; together with a sufficient Certainty of Fact to confirm them, and sufficient Motives to enforce them.

This being once granted, though the Scriptures should not be universally and infallibly exact in every Point, yet they are as exact as they need to be, infallibly exact as to all the beneficial Intents of a Revelation. It is, I hope, no dangerous, though needless Concession, to suppose, that the Stewards of the
Myseries

SERM. Mysteries of God, like wise Managers of an ample

IV. Estate, were punctual and careful in their Oeconomy as to the main Concern; but, amidst their great Abundance of spiritual Riches, did not attend to every Article of frivolous Expence; the Omission of which drew no Manner of bad Consequence after it. It is not incumbent upon us in our Disputes with *Deists* to prove, that *Moses*, the *Prophets* and *Evang-
gelists* were inspired to such a Degree as to be to a Tittle infallible as *Historians*. It is enough to prove that they were so as *Prophets*, *Lawgivers*, and Persons making known the Will of God; and that, as *Historians*, he guided them so far, that they should not be guilty of any momentous Escapes or Inadvertencies; it being absurd to think, that when God gave a Religion built upon Facts, he would leave the Writers to themselves in relating those Facts upon which it is built; so as to fall into such Inconsistencies as would affect the Credit of the Relators, and destroy the Credibility of the Relation.

It was no more strictly necessary, that the Deity should guard against trivial Errors, than that he should reveal useless Truths: it is enough that he hath discovered Truth as far as it is important to our Happiness; and prevented Error, as far as it is of an hurtful Tendency. An extraordinary Assistance is seldom vouchsafed when such an Assistance is not material: And certainly it was no very material Point, that the *Prophets* and *Apostles* should be secured from Mistakes that were not material; no more than it was so, that Providence should superintend all succeeding Transcribers, and preserve them from such *Errata*, as do not in the least defeat the original Intention of
Reve-

Revelation, or affect one essential Point. The grand Point is, whether we have satisfactory Evidence that Christianity is a Revelation from God, containing every Thing necessary to secure his Favour and our Happiness; not, whether it be a Revelation given us exactly in the same Way and Manner that we may imagine it should have been; and with that Degree of Clearness, Fulness and Freedom from every Stumbling-block as we might have expected: For it has been proved *, that God does not, in the Course of his Providence, dispense other Blessings to us in the same Way and Manner as we, previously to Experience, should have expected.

SERM.
IV.

The Question therefore between the *Deists* and us being not, whether the Inspiration of the Scriptures be universal as to every Thing however inconsiderable; but, whether it be so sufficient as to take in all Points that have a Relation to Faith and Practice; so sufficient, that we may absolutely depend upon it in every interesting Concern: To set Christianity aside, it must not only be proved that the inspired Writers have erred in Points of no Consequence, and upon which nothing depends: (for this would only prove that God left them to themselves in those Cases, and did not interpose where there was no Occasion for him to interpose.) It must be demonstrated that they have erred in the weightier Points, which make Revelation a Matter worthy to be received of all Men; or in the main Substance of some Fact, upon which the Truth of Revelation depends. Unless they can do this, they will only, like the Serpent, *bite the Heel*, or give a Wound (far from being incurable)

* See Bishop BUTLER's Analogy, Part II. Ch. 3.

SERM. to Religion in its lower or less noble Parts; ^{(without}
 IV. *bruising its Head* or hurting it in the capital, vital and
 constituent Parts.

But we will suppose their Charges of an higher Nature; Charges of Repugnances to Reason, Absurdities and Impossibilities in Matters of Moment. Now the Question is, whether these Absurdities which they object, relate to Things of whose Nature we are fully apprized. We are fully apprized of the Nature of moral Evidence, it being that, upon which we *do* and *must* act in the daily Course of Life: And we cannot reject, what has so high a Degree of it as Christianity hath, without embracing Absurdities: Absurdities as to a Point with the Nature of which we are fully acquainted, and therefore, we may be sure Absurdities really such. We cannot, for Instance, reject divine Faith without cancelling all human, and breaking the Chain which connects Man to Man: A monstrous Absurdity most certainly, and big with fatal Consequences. But if the Absurdities charged upon Christianity relate to Points of which we are not thoroughly apprized; Nothing is more common, than in such Points to imagine Absurdities where there are none, and therefore they may be imaginary, not real Impossibilities. Thus an ignorant *American* would think it absolutely impossible that our Thoughts might, without any oral Message, be conveyed from our Country to his. The Reason is, he wants an Idea, the Idea of Letters or Characters; which, as soon as he hath acquired, the seeming Impossibility vanisheth. And how many Ideas may we want, as to Things above our Ken, or imperfectly revealed; which, supposing we were Masters of them, would
 clear

clear up every seeming Repugnancy to Reason? Thus SERM.
IV. again a Person unacquainted with Painting would deem it impossible, that an even Canvass should exhibit what is uneven, the human Body with all its Prominencies and Depressions. A Stranger to Mathematics would think it a gross Absurdity to assert, that two Lines should be ever approaching one another, without a Possibility of meeting. That there are Quantities infinitely small, some of which are infinitely greater than others; that there is a Series of them, each infinitely less than the preceding, and infinitely more considerable than the following, approaching nearer and nearer, in an endless Progression to Nothing, which yet they never arrive at: These are Truths which would be looked upon by Men unskilled in Algebraic Calculations, as the Reveries of a distempered Mind, but are thought, by the great Masters of Science, to be Proofs of the Extent of human Understanding, and the utmost Efforts of our Abilities.

What then? Would you have us to admit any Thing that contradicts any clear Principle or evident Conclusion of Reason? No, I would have you act agreeably to the clear Dictates of Reason; it being a clear Dictate of Reason, that partial and imperfect Views may, and often do, occasion an Appearance of Wrongness and Absurdity, which a full comprehensive Knowledge of the whole Case entirely removes. These Appearances of Absurdities are but Shadows, which are owing to a Privation of Light, or that the Light does not diffuse itself over the whole Body of Truth, which has to us its dark as well as bright Side. We should remember that

SERM. that we know many Things but in *Part*; that the
 IV. most extensive Understanding hath its Boundaries;
 and that, when it is arrived at its full Height, the
 Man cannot, however much Thought he may take,
add one Cubit to the Stature or Size of it: That tho'
 we may shorten the Line of our Knowledge, as we
 may do that of our Lives, by our own Default, we
 cannot extend it beyond the Period assigned by God:
 Or if we could, it would be but Labour and Sorrow:
 The Deity sometimes being equally gracious in what
 he has hidden from our Eyes, as in what he hath re-
 vealed to them.

After all, such an Answer as this is sufficient as to
 most, if not all, of the Objections against the main
 Articles of our Belief. And such an Answer as
 this, plain Sense, without much Learning, might
 suggest. "Such a moral Evidence, as there is for
 " Christianity, is easy to be understood: and such
 " moral Evidence is the only Guide of Life; that
 " by which our Conduct is influenced, and our Be-
 " haviour determined in all practical Cases. Upon
 " this therefore I will rest, as God intended I should
 " do: Whereas your Objections against the Possi-
 " bility of a general Resurrection, the Redempti-
 " on, the Trinity, and other fundamental Doctrines,
 " depend upon metaphysical Intricacies, of
 " which we, the Bulk of Mankind, are no Judges
 " at all, whether there be not some Flaw in them;
 " and the very ablest Men are, it may be, but
 " very incompetent Judges. Shall I then be de-
 " termined to set Revelation aside, upon the Ac-
 " count of what I do not understand at all, and
 " Men of great Reach of Thought understand but
 " in

“ in Part, *viz.* fine-spun Subtilties of Disputation? SERM.
IV.
 “ Or shall I adhere to it upon the Account of,
 “ what are easy to be understood, moral Proofs?
 “ those very Proofs, which are a *Light unto my Paths*,
 “ and direct my Steps in the common Pursuits of
 “ Life? Whatever Value you may set on your la-
 “ bour'd Deductions, and a long Chain of abstruse
 “ Reasoning (as some do upon far-fetched and cost-
 “ ly Rarities) yet such is the Goodness of God,
 “ that those Arguments are generally the best,
 “ which are the easiest of Apprehension; as that
 “ Food is so, which is the easiest of Digestion.
 “ Away then with your abstracted Arguments
 “ against Religion, by which you, the *Disputers*
 “ of this World, can throw a studied Obscurity
 “ over any great Truth, however clear, and give
 “ a plausible Turn to any Falshood, however pal-
 “ pable. They seem to me to be mere Trials of
 “ Skill and Dexterity, and are not, I have heard,
 “ quite so good as those of an ancient Philosopher
 “ * against the *Possibility of Motion*, and those of a
 “ modern one † against the *Reality of Matter*:
 “ Arguments however that would baffle a very
 “ wise Man, though they would not convince even
 “ a very weak one. Dost they are, rais'd to
 “ obscure more important Truths, and to Dost
 “ they must return; or, after having been trou-
 “ blefome for a while, fall unregarded to the
 “ Ground. Moral Evidences, on the other Hand,
 “ are suited to my Capacity, and much better

* See Bayle's Dictionary in the Article ZENO.

† See Berkeley's Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.

“ fitted

SERM. "fitted to ensure a lasting Conviction to Crea-
 IV. "tures so formed as Men are, than any of
 "those specious Kinds of arguing, which are set
 "up in Opposition to them. They are a *Lantern*
 "to my Feet, near at Hand, and portable to my
 "Memory : Whereas Metaphysical Proofs, be they
 "never so good, are like the fixed Stars ; which,
 "though they may enlighten Beings, that move in
 "an Orb much superior, afford little or no Light to
 "Persons in my low Situation."

We are guilty of no Immorality in supposing the Reason, why we cannot conquer an Objection, to be, not that the Objection is unanswerable in itself, but that we want sufficient Forces of Understanding to conquer it, or perhaps sufficient Skill to conduct and manage those Forces we have to the best Advantage : Nay, in so doing we shew our Modesty : And it were to be wished, that some great Pretenders to Knowledge were Masters of the most valuable Part of it, that Part which teaches them Humility ; the Knowledge of their total Ignorance in many Things ; and their partial Ignorance as to all the rest. But we are guilty of an Immorality of a very deep Dye in refusing to submit to Moral Certainty ; it being confessedly criminal for any Man to do that in any Case, which, if all Men were to do in every other Case, would interfere with the general Happiness, and subvert the very Pillar on which Society rests.

Since the World began no one Instance can be given, that any Man was misled by trusting to such Proofs as Christianity is confirmed by. For whoever has been misled, it was not by yielding his Assent

to

to Moral Evidence as such, but by yielding it when SERM.
IV. it was not perfect in it's Kind, when it wanted some of the Ingredients, which enter into that of Christianity. But Numbers have been deceived by trusting to speculative Reasonings of a finer Texture; and Men of superior and exalted Sense have fallen into Errors, from which common Sense has secured the rest of Mankind.

The Proofs for Revelation have shone the brighter to every rational Enquirer, the more they have been of late canvassed, examined, and controverted. Controversy and Opposition having been to them, what the Wind is to the Plumage in *Indian* Crowns. The Plumes, however beautiful, never appear to the best Advantage, while they continue unmoved and undisturbed: The rude Disturbance and Agitation of the Wind sets them in Variety of Lights, opens and unfolds them, and calls forth into View the whole Strength of their Lustre, and every Beauty, which, during the Calm, escaped the Observation.

I shall conclude with observing, that what hath been so often said upon the Works of Nature, holds as true in Regard to the Scriptures, *viz.* A superficial and slender Acquaintance with them may tempt a Man to Infidelity; but an accurate, intimate Knowledge of them, and a thorough Insight into their Contents, brings the Mind back to a firm Belief, and makes us acknowledge and adore the great Author of them.

To whom be ascribed, as is most due, &c.

S E R M O N V.

The Damnatory Clauses in the ATHANASIAN Creed justified.

MARK XVI. 16.

He that believeth not shall be damned.

SERM.
V.

THIS has been thought an *hard Saying*, though it be our Blessed Saviour's, when he commissioned his Apostles to *preach the Gospel to every Creature*. It will be necessary therefore,

Ist, To consider with what *Limitations* the Proposition is to be understood; how far, and in what Points Unbelief is highly dangerous; and whether in some Cases we may not charitably suppose, that favourable Abatements will be made.

IIdly, To shew the Reasonableness of the Proposition properly *qualified* and explained, and the numerous ill Consequences of Unbelief. After which I shall,

IIIdly, Offer a few occasional Reflections, which arise from the Subject Matter of my Discourse.

I begin with my first Proposition.

Though

Though Ignorance, in many Cases, be absolutely SERM.
 unavoidable, there being several Truths quite out of V.
 the Reach of our Understanding ; yet a Man, gene-
 rally speaking, in plain and important Points may
 stand clear of Error. Because Error implies a wrong
 Judgment ; and Men are not under a strict Necessity
 of judging, where they have not Evidence ; or of
 judging any farther, than they have Evidence. Er-
 ror therefore, *material* Error, is commonly owing to
 the Want of Care, and Attention proportionable to
 the Moment of the Subject ; or to some predominant
 Passion, which discolours the genuine Appearances
 of Things. It is the common Case of Men, that
 when they are not determined by that Sufficiency of
 Evidence, which is fully laid before them, they are
 actuated by something else, than an ingenuous Love
 of Truth. And our Saviour takes here into Consi-
 deration the *common* Case of Unbelievers, leaving it
 to the general Apprehension of Mankind to except
 (which they are apt enough to do) some few *extraor-*
dinary Cases.

In the same Sense are to be understood the follow-
 ing Clauses in the *Creed*, commonly called the *Atha-*
nasian ; “ which Faith, except every One do keep
 “ whole and undefiled, without Doubt he shall pe-
 “ rish everlastingly.” And again, “ This is the
 “ Catholic Faith, which except a Man believe faith-
 “ fully, He cannot be saved.” These are to be un-
 derstood, like some other *general* Propositions, with
 proper *Reserves*, to soften and qualify the seeming
 Harshness of them. The Necessity of believing
 these Truths is only a *general* Necessity, like that of
 Baptism. And since the *Church of England* declares

SERM. Baptism itself to be *only generally necessary to Salvation* (charitably leaving Room for particular Cases, such as may reasonably be excepted) She ought to be understood in the same Sense, when She pronounces the same Necessity, though on another Subject. Our Saviour says expressly, that *except a Man be born of Water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. This is a general Proposition, like those in the *Creed*: Yet no one, except the *Papists*, ever interpreted it in so rigid and narrow a Sense, as that Infants, who died before Baptism could be had, should perish for the Want of it. If Disbelief proceeds from *Perverseness* of Will; Perverseness of Will is a great Crime; and all Crimes, without Repentance, are damnable: But if it does not proceed from Perverseness of Will, if it arises from *Incapacity*, or Want of the necessary Means of Instruction; such Want of Faith is involuntary, and what is involuntary cannot be sinful. But it was foreign to the Design of the *Creed* to take Notice of this Restriction in this particular Case, which is applicable to all Cases in general, whether of Belief or Practice.

Supposing any Man should assert, *that all Persecutors, if impenitent, should be punished hereafter*: the Assertion, I suppose, would scarce be thought too harsh even by Men of great Moderation; yet even here, a Distinction is to be made between those who *offend of malicious Wickedness*, and those who do it in the *Simplicity of their Hearts*. Persecution may be either the Result of a wicked Heart; or it may be the Product of an over-heated and distempered Brain; and in this Case may become the Object of God's Mercy. However the Doctrine, that *Persecutors,*

cutors, as well as other *Criminals*, are obnoxious to the divine Displeasure, may be laid down in general Terms, without clogging it with particular Exceptions. Cases of unconquerable Prejudices, and unavoidable Ignorance, like Cases of Necessity, are always implied; and therefore need not be particularly pointed out. It is thus the Scriptures have inculcated Obedience in *general* to those that are set over us; without specifying those extraordinary and critical Cases, which might warrant Resistance, and make a Change of Government necessary: because such a Specification was needless. People aggrieved are rather apt to imagine such a Crisis, when there is none, than not to find out, when it really is.

Those who condemn the *Creed* for not excepting Cases where Unbelief could not be helped, might, with more Justice perhaps, have found Fault with such an Exception as a ridiculous as well as a needless Singularity, without any Precedent to countenance it in any Body of Laws: where utter Inability is always understood of Course to be a sufficient Excuse; and, when it can be made to appear, always pardoned. Nay, they might perhaps have objected, that we can scarce make an Overture or Promise, however seemingly absolute, wherein some necessary Conditions, which would be trifling to mention expressly, are not of Course supposed; upon a Failure of which we are discharged from the Performance of it. Such is the Nature of Man, ever prone to cavil and find Fault! We think we have Reason to be uneasy, unless we have Things exactly our own Way; and when we have them our own Way, we are uneasy still, and that not without Reason. It is likewise to be observed,

SERM. that the *condemning* Sentences do not extend to every
 V. minute Particular in the *Creed*; they only are pointed
 against those, who obstinately deny the Substance of
 the Christian Faith, and particularly that, *Father*,
Son, and *Holy Ghost*, though *distinct*, are so *united*,
 so inseparable, that they may be said to be *One God*;
 just as God is in Heaven, on Earth, and every where
 else; yet Being in Heaven, Being on Earth, and
 Being every where else is *One Essence*, because *undi-*
vided. Divine Being in Heaven is God, Divine
 Being on Earth is God, and Divine Being every
 where else is so too; and yet *not Three Gods but one*
God. The common People have nothing to do with
 minute Appendages, and Technial Terms, which
 were designed as so many Fences against Metaphysi-
 cal Subtilties, and artful Evasions. The *Creed* is
 only the common Doctrine of the *Trinity* and *Incar-*
nation guarded: and they who believe those funda-
 mental Articles, virtually believe every Thing else,
 which was put in to save and secure those fundamen-
 tal Articles.

Some Medium there ought to be between abso-
 lutely condemning those, who differ from us even
 in concerning Points; and, on the other Hand, re-
 presenting the most concerning Points so very doubt-
 ful, and so much to be said for and against them,
 that we cannot be *morally* certain, that we are in the
 Right; and therefore we ought to be charitable to
 those who are of another Opinion. Thus some
 Men with a Design, or Pretence of promoting Cha-
 rity, are introducing Scepticism; the worst Kind of
 Uncharitableness. For it is uncharitable to the last
 Degree

Degree (though they may not design it) to unsettle the Minds of well-meaning People ; to beget in them Doubts and Scruples, and (what is the Consequence of those Scruples) Uneasiness, as to Points of the last Importance. On the contrary, it may, I think, be proved, that Men may explain away any Moral Precept, however clearly expressed, by the same wretched Subterfuges, and unnnatural Constructions, by which some have endeavoured to darken the Texts of Scripture relating to the *Redemption* and the *Trinity*. And perhaps it would be hard to give an Instance of any Christian of sound Sense, who erred fundamentally in these Points, but either He was misled into his Error by *Metaphysical Abstractions* ; by flying out into that mighty Void, where Knowledge ends, and Ignorance begins ; and reasoning, or rather *imagining*, on certain Points, where, to reason rightly, is to submit our Reason to God's Revealed Will : or He was an Admirer and implicit Follower of some Metaphysical Refiner. If Words are capable of any fixed and determined Meaning, those are so, as much as any other, in which these Doctrines are conveyed : But if Words are not capable of any fixed Sense, it is to no Purpose to write or converse at all. What then ? do we absolutely condemn those who differ from us in these Points ? No. The Medium between these two Extremes is, that, leaving a Latitude of Thinking in Points less useful, and laying the main Stress upon Essentials, we even, as to the last, abstract Men's Persons from their Opinions ; and while we condemn the latter as pernicious, treat the former with Tenderness. Fundamentals *abstractedly from Persons*, as relating to

SERM. the Scheme of Christianity, may be fixed by a certain
 V. and determined Standard, and they are plainly those,
 that are so intimately interwoven with Christianity,
 that It and They must stand or fall together. But
 Fundamentals in a *relative View*, as respecting the
 Salvation of particular Persons, cannot be precisely
 defined and adjusted by any fixed and unchanging
 Measure. They must vary, according to the Va-
 riety of Men's Apprehensions, Circumstances and
 Opportunities. And it is impossible to settle those
 Points, the Belief of which shall be necessary to
 Salvation, absolutely, and universally; to all Men
 without any Distinction; in all Cases, under such an
 endless Disparity of Capacities, Means of Instruction,
 and Situation in Life. Who can tell what deter-
 mined Proportion of Faith (neither less nor more)
 will carry a Man to Heaven? That Quantity of
 Faith, which may be insufficient in itself to make a
 Man a compleat Christian, may be sufficient for that
 Man, who, humanly speaking, has done the best He
 could in his Circumstances.

We cannot therefore, we do not, peremptorily
 and without any Exception presume to pass a deci-
 sive Sentence on Men erring fundamentally. To
 their Maker they stand or fall, who alone views the
 hidden Springs and Causes of Men's Persuasions and
 Actions, before whose righteous Tribunal we, as
 well as they, must appear. His unerring Wisdom
 can only form a true Judgment of Men's Hearts and
 Heads; whether the former may be deeply tinged
 with incurable Prepossessions, and the latter irremedia-
 bly want a Clearness of Conception: and His Goodness
 may

may make favourable Allowances in such Cases. We cannot decide how far His Mercy may extend to Enthusiasts, or those that make near Approaches to Enthusiasm by a constitutional Impetuosity of Temper. Nay some Men, who, in all other Points, have spoke the Words of Truth, Reason, and Soberness, have in one Particular, and only in one Particular, betrayed evident Marks of a disturbed Mind. Some very great Men have mistaken an arbitrary Association of Ideas for a just Connection of them: and hence, I suppose, it has come to pass, that some Philosophers of Eminence have advanced as extravagant and absurd Opinions, as the most vulgar Reception has countenanced.

It is no difficult Matter to find by what Means Great Men have been misled into an Error. Suppose, for Instance, a Man has, by a long Habit of Thinking, joined together the Ideas of *Necessity*, of *Existence*, and that of *one Person only* in the Godhead: so that, his Thoughts having run for a considerable Time in a wrong Channel, He cannot disjoin, or put them asunder: though others cannot perceive what *necessary*, that is, *immutable and unperishable Existence* has to do with *Unity of Person*. The two Ideas do not imply or infer one another. They want some intermediate Term to bring them to a friendly Correspondence. Some have so inseparably associated the Idea of *Succession* with *Duration*, and of *Extension* with *Presence*, that they ascribe them to the *eternal Duration*, and *universal Presence* of God. And these Men, who, in Consequence of such Notions, do maintain an infinite Number, a Number that is neither equal nor unequal, a last Number; have

SERM. have sometimes levelled their Artillery against My-
 V. *steries*; that is, after having *swallowed a Camel*, they
 have *strained at a Gnat*.

It may somewhat extenuate the Guilt of a *fundamental* Error, that those, who abet it, may not perhaps see, that it is subversive of Christianity. The Consequences, which flow from it, may be very shocking; but they may not discern those Consequences: Nay, it may be sometimes charitably presumed, that they would have rejected their Tenets with Abhorrence, if they had perceived that such Deductions necessarily resulted from them. Whatever Consequences we may charge upon the Doctrine, we ought not therefore to charge them upon the Men, especially if they be *remote* Consequences, and stand at a great Distance from the Principles which they espouse.

Again, we cannot determine how far the Judgment may be under the Tyranny of an Imagination, which has an uncommon Vivacity, especially if it comes near to Madness, and has been long indulged in its despotic Sway. When the Imagination has great Beauty, and irresistible Charms, it will get and maintain an Ascendant over that which was designed to rule over it. Several stamp the Characters of Divinity on an *Idol* which the Fancy has set up, and wonder that all *Mankind* do not *fall down and worship it*. Every slight Argument, that countenances it, is Demonstration; and every one that opposes it is a palpable Fallacy: They see it in every Text of Scripture, and are surprized at the unaccountable Blindness of other People, that *they* do not see it too. The great Dispute between Truth and Error, be-
 tween

tween Religion and Irreligion, seems to be only, what ought to be no Dispute at all, a perpetual Contention between Reason and Imagination, which should have the Preference. Reason can prove, that unless its Comprehension were the full Measure of Truth, several Things may be true which it cannot comprehend: that therefore the Incomprehensibility of a Thing is no Objection to the Truth of it: and what is no Objection to the Truth of a Proposition, can be none to the Credibility or Belief of it: Reason can see well enough, that what may appear absurd upon our partial and imperfect Views, might have quite a different Aspect, if our Ideas were commensurate to the whole Extent of the Subject. But a proud and rebellious Imagination refuses to admit what it cannot bring down to its own Level, and of the Manner of which it can form no Idea.

There is sometimes an Inability to go out of that Track of Thinking, to which we have been accustomed from our Infancy. Our Blessed Saviour, who could with Ease dispossess Men of Evil Spirits, found it a much harder Task, notwithstanding His Miracles, to dispossess them of inveterate Prejudices, and rivetted Errors.

How far any of these Cases will either wholly, or in Part, excuse a fundamental Error, how far an unnatural Association of *different* Ideas, which a customary Connection has made to some Men almost the *same*, might have been prevented; or if it early and unawares got Possession, might have been afterward broken by proper Application, we know not: God only knows whose infallible

SERM. infallible Judgment will pass our irrevocable Doom,
 V. after his Mercy has made proper Abatements. It

is our Province to put the most favourable Construc-
 tion on Things and Persons that we can; and not
 to curse those, whom we do not know that God
 hath cursed, nor to hurl the Thunderbolts of Divine
 Vengeance on the Heads, that have a different Turn
 of Thinking from our own.

But here I must observe, that a Narrowness of
 Thinking prevails very much among those, who
 would pass themselves upon the World for Men of
 the most enlarged Views. If some few weak Be-
 lievers may have been so uncharitable, as to confine
 God's Favour to their own Pale, and sentence the
 rest of the World to Misery; too many Unbelievers
 are not at all behind-hand with them in this Respect.
 For they arrogate all common Sense and Reason to
 themselves, and talk and write as if they were the
 only Masters of Thought, and the rest of the World
 a Set of distempered Bigots. Besides, no Men nar-
 row their Terms of Communion more, than *they*
 do; nor, as far as one can observe, treat with more
 Coolness and Reservedness those, who are known to
 differ essentially from them: not to mention, that
 they inveigh against an imaginary Persecution (call-
 ing *Negative Discouragements* by that invidious Ap-
 pellation) with that merciless Keenness of Spirit, from
 which real Persecution proceeds. They who allow
 themselves to say such bitter and envenomed Things,
 seem to want nothing, but the Power, to *do* as hard
 Things as they *say*. They put in Practice the only
 Persecution in their Power against Christianity, a
 Persecution very distasteful to ingenuous Minds,
 the

the Persecution of petulant Tongues, and Pens as **SERM.**
petulant. **V.**

But of whatever *Manner of Spirit* they may be, Christianity is certainly the most charitable and benevolent Institution that can be ; one Mark, among many others, that it descended from the most benevolent Being in the Universe. The Merits of our Saviour take in all from the Foundation of the World to the Consummation of it. Even those virtuous Heathens, who never heard of the Name of Christ, may be made Partakers of some Degree of Bliss for His Sake : And, though not made happy *in* the Christian Religion, may become happy *by* it ; by the Redemption of our Saviour, and by His Merits applied to them. For *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall All be made alive* ; all, but those, who have made themselves incapable of eternal Happiness, by a final and unrelenting Impenitence.

And as to virtuous Christians, who have erred in Points essential, but erred with a well-meaning Heart, through some unsurmountable Prejudice, or unaffected wrong Turn of Thinking, they shall be saved *in* the Christian Covenant, as virtuous Heathens may be made happy *out* of it. For it is one express Part of the Christian Covenant, that a Man shall be accepted *according to what He hath*, or might have ; and *not according to what He hath not*, or could not have. With this Limitation my Text is to be understood ; He that disbelieveth the Christian Revelation, or the Essential Doctrines therein revealed, provided He could not have known better, shall be obnoxious to the Divine Displeasure.

For,

SERM. For, provided He was sincerely willing, the Will,
 V. the hearty determinate Will, shall be accepted for
 the Deed. And with this Limitation the *Damnato-*
ry Clauses in the *Creed* are to be expounded, and
 indeed have been expounded by every intelligent
 Person.

Whatever other important Truths we may be obliged to hold; there is one Scripture Truth, as important as any, which ought not to be forgotten, or violated, *viz.* that we ought to preserve and cultivate the most extensive Charity; that Charity, which at the same Time that it *believeth all Things*, is not apt to *think Evil*, without substantial Grounds, of those that believe not; much less to imagine and censure as Unbelievers those who agree with us in the Main. A little, narrow, contracted Spirit may sometimes stand clear of shocking Errors, but it does not open wide enough to admit the most generous and enlarged Truths, in such a Manner, as thereby to encrease a Man's Love to God, and to his Fellow-Creatures: It may be free from any gross Immoralities, but it does not prompt a Man to excel in Virtue, and to abound in noble Actions.

The Sum is, that we do not limit to a few *comparatively*, that Mercy of God, which is *over all his Works*; we maintain, that as to fundamental Points, no Man shall be accountable for Error, provided it was *invincible* (which, it may be supposed, is generally not the Case;) and as to other Matters, which either are not very clearly revealed, or are not of such Concernment as to affect the substantial, and constituent Parts of Religion; there even a *vincible* Ignorance may, upon a general Repentance, be accepted

cepted by God through the Merits of Jesus Christ, SERM.
V.
especially from those, of whom *much is not required* — that, be Men's Errors *vincible* or *invincible*, we must not contract any Rancour or Sullenness to any Part of our Kind, but defend the grand Truths of Christianity, which render it truly venerable, with that Temper and Spirit of Christianity, which makes it thoroughly amiable. So far our Charity may extend itself, and farther than this it cannot extend itself, without giving up every Thing in Christianity, which is distinctive of it, as a Matter of little or no Consequence; which amounts to the same Thing as giving up Christianity itself. But this leads me,

Illy, To shew the Reasonableness of the Proposition in my Text, properly *qualified* and explained, and the numerous ill Consequences of Unbelief.

If God sent His only begotten Son into the World to reveal certain Truths, and armed him with Credentials sufficient to induce the Belief of them in every honest Enquirer; it cannot be a Matter of Indifference, in Regard to our Salvation, whether we believe or disbelieve them. God would not send His Son upon an unconcerning and unavailing Errand; which would be the Case, if Men, notwithstanding the Sufficiency of the Evidence, for Want of the proper Use of their Faculties, might finally and obstinately reject the Message, without endangering their eternal Welfare. Such a Conduct would be highly criminal and affrontive to God, and therefore

SERM. therefore punishable, in proportion as it was affrontive and criminal.

V.

Further ; Christianity represents us as *fallen* Creatures, Creatures that have *no Health in us*. In this Situation the Scheme of eternal Salvation by Jesus Christ is offered to us as the only Remedy, the only Medicine for our Recovery. Consequently He who obstinately refuses to take the Remedy (which must be taken or accepted by Faith) is to be considered as still in a State of *Sickness unto Death*, or, in other Words, the *Wrath of God abideth on Him*.

Again ; would it be any Uncharitableness to tell a Man, except He led a good Life He could not be saved ? No certainly : it would be a Breach of Charity not to tell Him so. The Disbelief however of certain important Articles disqualifieth us for the Performance of certain Observances, which are essential Ingredients of a good Christian Life. Some of the Duties of Christian Piety cannot be performed, as to the *Substance* and *Matter*, nor any of them, as to the *Manner* and *Form*, which will render them acceptable to God, without the Knowledge and Belief of the Mysteries of our Religion. We cannot, for Instance, pay Acts of direct Worship to our Saviour without Idolatry, unless we believe Him to be essentially God : And if our Prayers are only acceptable to the Father through the Merits of our Redeemer and Mediator ; we cannot pray to the Father, in the Manner we ought, and in such as will be accepted by Him, unless we trust in his Son as our Divine Mediator and Redeemer. We do not then lay great Stress on mere speculative Points : We earnestly contend for those Matters of Faith (such

(such as the Divinity, Redemption and Mediation of the second Person) without which Christian Piety must fall to the Ground. This single Consideration, not to mention several others, proves them to be of the very Essence of Christianity. Christianity is Natural Religion considerably enlarged by a new Set of Discoveries; Discoveries of new Relations; from which new Duties must of Course proceed, and which call for suitable Returns of Gratitude and Homage. Not to mention that these Articles, in their genuine Tendency, give us more lovely Ideas of our Creator, who gave His only begotten Son for us, and increase our Charity to our Fellow-Creatures, for the meanest of which Christ vouchsafed to die. In short, the Love of our Saviour, which must be founded on a right Belief in Him, who is so great and good in Himself, and has done so great and good Things for us, is Morality: Morality in a much higher Sense, than the Love of our Fellow-Creatures, who have done nothing, in Comparison with what He has done and suffered, for us.

But does not insisting upon these Articles, far from promoting mutual Love, irritate Men's Spirits, and beget endless Animosities? The Query is, whether the Articles are *worth* contending for, not whether they may, or may not, *occasionally* produce Animosities. We should rather chuse, I suppose, to have some fixed Principles, by which we may abide, though Men will disagree with us uncharitably about them; than to have no fixed Principles, to fluctuate in endless Uncertainty, and then to disagree oftener, and more uncharitably about Things of much less Consequence. For in Proportion as a

SERM.
V.

SERM. Warmth for spiritual Concerns was deadened, a

V. Warmth for temporal Matters would be heightened.

“ I do not doubt,” says a celebrated Writer in one of his Letters, “ but that Commentators (did the “ same Interests go along with them) would carry “ the World to as violent Extremities, Animosities, “ and even Persecutions about Variety of Opinions “ in *Criticism*, as ever they did in *Religion*; and “ that, in Defect of Scripture to quarrel upon, we “ should have *French, Italian and Dutch Commenta-* “ *tors* ready to burn one another about *Homer, Vir-* “ *gil, Terence and Horace.*” These uncharitable Feuds arise from Spleen, and the Tribe of black Passions, which, if Religion were out of the Way, would discharge themselves with greater Fury, as wanting that salutary Restraint, upon other Objects.

If we would have any Religion at all, Natural or Revealed, *that* Religion must imply and require the Belief of those Principles which are constituent of it. And therefore, though Allowance is made in Scripture for Variety of Opinions in Matters of less Consequence, yet there ought to be an Uniformity in *Essentials*. If it be objected, that we cannot think alike even upon *Essentials*: I answer, that the Objection proves too much, it strikes at *Natural* as well as *Revealed* Religion. For even there, several must have much more confused and indistinct Notices of God’s Attributes, His *general* and *particular* Providence, than others of much larger Reach of Thought, and superior Discernment, who yet may agree so far in the Main, as to influence their Practice thereby. Nay, learned Men may widely differ

differ about the *Explication* of an Article either of SERM.
V.
Natural or Revealed Religion, who yet hold the Article itself: just as several have very different Sentiments concerning the Manner of God's universal *Presence* and *Duration*, who are notwithstanding uniform in the Belief, that He is universally *Present* and *Eternal*. May not any Man of common Sense understand, that our Saviour made all Things; and that He that made all Things must be all-knowing, and therefore God? For *He that made the Eye, shall He not see?* and *He that made the Ear, shall He not hear?* or *He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall He not He know?* Might he not soon be convinced, that, when our Saviour is stiled the *First and the Last, the Beginning and the End*; by the *Beginning* is meant the *Efficient Cause*, from which all Things proceed: and by the *End*, the *Final Cause*, to which all Things are referred. He may think alike with others of brighter Abilities, as to the Substance of *this* or any other Fundamental Article, as far as it is necessary to regulate his religious Conduct; though he may not be able to form as clear, correct and enlarged Conceptions, or think with the same Justness, Compass and Extent. Something, however, might be done even towards this, provided Men would exert the Faculties, which God has given them, with the same Application upon these Subjects, as they bestow upon Matters of less Moment. When Men have thought themselves obliged to set about a Thing in good Earnest, they have done that, which they despaired before of ever being able to do. There are Abilities sometimes in the Mind unknown to the Possessor of them, for want of something to

SERM. call them forth. When the Soul strives to raise it-
 V. self above the Ground, above low Concerns, it's
 Wings expand and unfold themselves, and, in Pro-
 portion as they do unfold themselves, discover,
 what would otherwise have escaped the View, new
 Beauties, a greater Lustre, Gloss and Brightness,
 which were folded and shut up before.

Supposing Christianity, which has stood the Scru-
 tiny of so many Centuries, should be totally reject-
 ed; Truth would receive the greatest Wound it
 ever felt: a total Uncertainty would follow as to
 every Doctrine, but those for which we had Mathe-
 matical or Metaphysical Certainty. What can we
 believe as certain, would People say, if God has
 suffered an Imposture to come recommended to us
 with such strong and commanding Evidences, as
 have deceived as wise, as inquisitive, and as disinte-
 rested Men, as ever lived? For such have lived and
 died in the Profession of Christianity. What can we
 depend upon as sufficiently proved, if that be set
 aside as false, which has so strong Proofs, that no
 Instance can be given of any Thing, that was ever
 suspected to be false, which had so many bright In-
 dications of Truth, as Christianity has? Christiani-
 ty stands upon as good a Footing as any Parts of
 our Knowledge, except such, as are founded upon
 abstract Ideas, or immediate Sensations. In short,
 upon the total Rejection of Christianity that would
 be brought to pass, which was brought to pass at
 the Crucifixion of it's Founder, the Sun of Truth
 would be *Eclipsed*, and there *would be a lasting Dark-
 ness over the Face of the Earth*; a Darkness, like
 that too, not produced by the Laws of Nature, by
 the

the Laws of *our* Nature, which require us to proceed, if we would act at all, on *Moral Certainty*; and often, on Evidence short of that. The Defenders of Christianity have, I think, fully proved, that there is, all Things considered, a *Moral Demonstration* of the Truth of it. And as in Matters capable of *Mathematical Demonstration*, we ought to abide by a Proposition so demonstrated, notwithstanding it may be attended with inextricable Difficulties: so in Matters capable only of *Moral Proofs*, we are obliged to acquiesce in a *Moral Demonstration*; notwithstanding there may be several Intricacies, which we cannot clear up. Those, who have departed either from Christianity, or the fundamental Doctrines thereof, upon the Account of numerous Difficulties, have run themselves always into gross and palpable Absurdities; of which numerous Instances might be given. They have acted like that injudicious Fencer in *Tully*, who, while he was guarding against a Pass from which he might have received some slight Harm, laid himself open to one, which affected his Vitals. Those, who will not believe any Thing, unless they can account for every Thing relating to it, should, one would think, in pursuance of their Principles, fall into the wild Scheme of *Egomism*. The *Egomists* having resolved to admit nothing that was mysterious or incomprehensible; and finding that every Thing was *so*, more or less, came at last to this Conclusion; that no Man ought to believe any Thing but his own Existence. For, though how he came into Being, and was continued in it, was a Mystery and Intricacy which he could not clearly account for; yet these very mysterious Dif-

[SERM. V. difficulties and Intricacies proved his Existence; it being a self-evident Proposition, that, unless he had existed, he could have raised, or had, no mysterious Difficulties or Perplexities in his Mind at all.

Since then the Evidence for Christianity is so strong; and the Importance of It's Doctrines so great: and since Disbelief would be attended with a Train of bad Consequences; it follows, that God might require our Belief on Pain of His Displeasure. And it is a Matter of Kindness in any one, to warn us of the dangerous Nature of Unbelief (some uncommon Cases known only to God excepted;) as it would be Uncharitableness, to lull us into a fatal Security; instead of awakening our Attention to Truths of so high Concernment. I proceed,

III^{dly}, To offer one or two short occasional Reflections, which arise from the Subject Matter of my Discourse.

1st, Let us, besides the *Reasonableness* and *Necessity*, reflect on the *Desireableness* of the Christian Faith: — That the best Man, who had an humble Sense of himself, a deep Sense of his Guilt, and an awful Sense of God's Holiness and Purity, would not be willing to trust to the hazardous Event of Uncovenanted Mercy: He would wish, affectionately wish, That Religion to be true, which lays before him a full Pardon for his Sins upon Repentance, by an express Covenant: And such is the Goodness of God, that we may presume, nothing that is false can deserve the affectionate Wishes of the best of Men,

Infidels

Infidels may be divided into two Classes; the *SERM.*
 Men of *Pleasure*, and the Men of *Thought*. As to *V.*
 the former, None are greater Self-deniers than those,
 who deny themselves no sensual Pleasures however
 criminal. By indulging a Pruriency of the coarser
 Desires, and thereby inducing a Callousness of Heart,
 they must beget in themselves a Disrelish for every
 manly, rational, and valuable Enjoyment; con-
 tract an habitual Littleness of Soul; and an Insensi-
 bility to each humane, tender, and refined Sentiment.
 Surely, a good Christian, in Belief and Prac-
 tice, must have more substantial Gratifications; and
 consequently be, in strict Propriety of Speech, more
 a Man of Pleasure, of real Pleasure (which will stand
 the Test of cool Reflection) than the Person, whom
 the World miscalls a *Man of Pleasure*. As to the
 Men of *Thought*; however they may appear in Com-
 pany, yet when one traces them to those Places,
 where they throw off all Disguise, one finds that,
 generally speaking, their *Temper*s are as dark and
 embroiled as their *System*, the gloomy System of un-
 relenting Necessity. The Truth is, though they will
 not see Evidence enough to make them good Chri-
 stians, they cannot almost help seeing as much as
 will make them uneasy. Where there is such a
 strong Day light of Evidence, however they may
 endeavour to shut up all the Avenues of Light, yet
 some unwelcome Beams will force themselves in to
 disturb their Repose. Hence that Virulence against
 Christianity. For when Men are uneasy, they must
 discharge their Spleen upon that, which makes
 them so.

SERM. 2dly, Let us make a Distinction, where there is
 V. a *Difference*, between a modest Doubter, who offers
 his Objections with an ingenuous Candour, and an insolent Scoffer. I mention this rather, because Free-Thinking, if we may judge from a late Instance, appears to be little else, than a Permission to talk and write loosely and petulantly on every Subject, without being confined to the Severity of close Reasoning, or the Restraints of common Decency, upon any Point, however sacred. A late Piece of this Kind is made up of three of the basest Ingredients, that can enter into the Composition of any Man, or any Writing: *Disingenuity*, *ludicrous Impiety*, and *Dulness*. And the Author has Recourse to those Arts, which would expose any Cause (but Infidelity, that needs them) and any Person (but an Infidel, that makes Use of them) to universal Contempt. But he knew what he was doing. To put Men, by strict Reasoning, into a serious Frame, and sedate Composure of Mind, is not the Way to propagate Irreligion: Seriousness and Thoughtfulness being the Soil, in which Religion grows and thrives. To propagate Irreligion effectually, you must endeavour to dissipate all Seriousness and Thoughtfulness, by giving Things a ludicrous Turn. The Force of Religion is lost by betraying the Mind into Levity, by lewd Buffoonery and ill-bred Drollery. Such Persons are either to be sharply rebuked; or, what is sometimes better, entirely neglected; while the candid Objector is to be answered with that Spirit of Meekness, which becomes the *Followers of the Lamb*.

Lastly,

Lastly, Let us consider, (and may the Consideration sink deep into your Hearts!) that whereas it is a controverted Point, whether a virtuous *Heathen* or *Mahometan* may be saved in their respective Religions; it is a confessed Point, as has been often observed, and cannot be too often observed, that an Immoral Man cannot be saved in any Religion.

SERM.
V.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

The Being, Nature and Offices of Evil
Spirits considered.

I PET. V. 9. latter Part.

— *Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring
Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may
devour.*

SERM.
VI.

I N discoursing on which Words I shall,

Ist, Consider the *Being, Nature* and *Offices* of Evil
Spirits. And,

II^{dly}, Make some Inferences.

MAN has little Reason to think, that He is the Master-piece of the whole Creation; or, that the Fulness of God's Power and Wisdom is exhausted upon a weak, frail, impotent Creature, that is probably the lowest in the Scale of reasonable Beings. It is much more consistent with God's Attributes to suppose, that we, who are next to the Beasts that perish, are far from making the nearest Approaches, without any intermediate Order of Beings, to an all-perfect Deity; that, as the Chain of Beings *descends* uninterrupted

uninterrupted from Man to Brute, from Brutes to SERM.
imperceptible Insects; so it *ascends*, by a beautiful VI.
and regular Gradation, from *Man* to *Angel*, *Arch-*
angel, and all *those thousand thousands that stand be-*
fore God; and *the ten thousand times ten thousand that*
minister unto Him. The Transition in this Poem of
Nature, from one *Kind* to another, being so ex-
tremely fine and delicate, that we scarce know where
the one ends, and the other begins. Yet the Dig-
nity of the noblest of those Beings bears no more
Proportion to His, who *dwells in unapproachable Glory*,
than a gilded Cloud, on which the Evening Sun has
impressed its Beams, and enriched with beautiful
Stains of *Light*, does to that great Abyss of Light,
from which it derives its reflected Beauty. He can
still make Beings, which shall as much surpass *Arch-*
angels of the highest Class; as an *Archangel* of the
highest Class surpasses the most despicable Insect. For
every finite Creature, how great soever, must be in-
finite Descents beneath an *all-perfect* Being.

The World is one large universal Kingdom di-
vided into several Provinces; where there are *Di-*
versities of Beings and *Administrations*, but *the same*
God which worketh all in all. God's manifold Wis-
dom may have diversified the wide Expanse of the
Creation with Variety of spiritual, superior Beings,
of whose transcendent Powers and Faculties we,
whose Knowledge is widely disproportionate to the
whole Extent of even material Beings, have no more
Notion than a Reptile has of the Faculties and Wis-
dom of a Man.

The Query is, how Beings ennobled with these
Distinguished Abilities, could fall from that Estate

in

SERM. in which they were placed, and plunge themselves
 VI. into an Abyſs of Woe. To this it may be answered ;
 That it is probable, all Kinds of rational Beings as
 well as we, have their *State* of Probation ; That an
 uninterrupted, everlaſting Enjoyment of unallayed
 Happineſs, Virtue, Truth, is too great a Prize to be
 attained without any antecedent State of Trial ;
 without any Difficulties proportionable to the
 Strength of their Nature, to call forth their Worth,
 and put it to the Teſt. And if they had Difficulties
 correſpondent and ſuitable to their ſuperior Strength ;
 it is no difficult Matter to ſuppoſe, they might be
 foiled and overcome by them, before they were in a
 confirmed and eſtabliſhed State of Goodneſs.

The Scripture makes *Pride* the Cauſe of their Fall ;
 a Fault from which the brighteſt Geniuſes are not al-
 ways the moſt exempt. They are too apt to be ena-
 moured with the Beauty, and dazzled with the Luſtre
 of their own Excellencies.

To find Men of diſtinguiſhed Parts, and an un-
 common Reach and Quickneſs of Thought, reject-
 ing the received Notions, and diſbelieving the great
 Truths of Chriſtianity, ſtaggers the Faith of ſome
 Men ; who ſhould reflect, that theſe Men as often
act contrary to the Rules of common Senſe, as they
think differently from the reſt of the World. A
 Fool with more of Wit than half Mankind ; a Fool,
 I mean, as to the Conduct of his Affairs, and the Ma-
 nagement of his Eſtate, is no uncommon Character.
 And why ſhould it be any more Matter of Wonder,
 that Men, notwithſtanding the Superiority of their
 Parts, ſhould think, talk, and write wildly, and out
 of the Way, in religious Matters, than that they
 ſhould

should behave indiscreetly in the Oeconomy of their private Concerns, of which we every Day see Instances?

People may cry up fine Sense, exalted and superior Sense; yet common Sense, if exerted with due Care, and attended with Humility, is the best Guard against any fatal Errors in Religion, or Miscarriages in common Life. The Devil was distinguished for his great Abilities, yet He fell through an overweening Opinion of himself. *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! For thou hast said in thy Heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the Sides of the Pit.* The Meaning of which Passage is plainly this; that Pride had been the Destruction of the *Babylonian King*, just as it had been of *Lucifer*, to whom he is here compared. And *St. Paul* warns us, *lest being puffed up with Pride, we fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.*

The Corruption of the best Things is always the worst: no wonder therefore that a fallen Angel should become a Fiend of pure unmixed Malice; (desperately bent on Mischief, which recoils upon himself, but augments God's Glory) endeavouring, like People that are sinking, to draw in others after him; and to tempt Mankind, as wicked Men do their Fellow-creatures.

If we consult the most Authentic Monuments of Antiquity, we find all Nations under the Sun in the earliest Ages, however differing in other Points, agreeing in the Belief of *Evil* as well as *Good* Spirits. The *Persian Magi* and the *Chaldeans* distinguished the *Devil* by the Name of *Arimanius*; the *Egyptians*

SERM. *Egyptians* under that of *Typhon*. The *Greeks* and
 VI. *Romans* admitted both *Wicked* and *Good Dæmons*.

One of the most Ancient *Greek Philosophers* * asserts, that there was a Downfal of *Dæmons*, who revolted from God; and that *Ophioneus*, or the Old Serpent, was at the Head of them. *Homer* makes mention of the *Dæmon* of *Discord*, which was in Heaven; but precipitated from thence to the Earth; where it employs itself in Works suitable to its malicious Nature. Very remarkable are the Words of *Plutarch*, an Historian of very extensive Knowledge, as well as an able Philosopher (in his *Parallel*) on the Occasion of two Apparitions to *Dion* and *Brutus*.

If *Dion* and *Brutus*, Men of great Solidity and *Philosophers*, neither weak nor credulous, were so affected with these Visions, as seriously to relate them, and consult their Friends upon them; we must return to the Opinion of the oldest Philosophers, and own; that there are Bad Spirits, who envy Good Men; and endeavour to *stumble* them; lest, going on in the Paths of Virtue, they should enjoy, after Death, a happier Lot than themselves.

'Tis impossible to account how so many distant Nations, between whom there was no Correspondence, and who disagreed in other material Points, should universally with one Consent join in a Belief, into which no sure Principle of Reason could lead them, that there were Evil Spirits; unless it was derived by Tradition from our First Parent; who

* *Pherecydes*, as quoted by *Marcellus Ficinus*.

knew,

knew, by melancholy Proof, that there was a Temp- SERM.
ter. VI.

So far were they, in those early Ages, from disbelieving the Being of *Evil Spirits*; that they, several of them, ran into another Extreme, and admitted *two Independent Principles*; the one of *Good*, and the other of *Evil*. In Opposition to this early Notion, which was then too predominant, an ingenious Writer supposes that the Book of *Job* was composed; where we find, that the *Devil* could do nothing against *Job* any farther than the Deity permitted, for the Trial and Exercise of his Virtue. He could not exceed his Commission, nor enlarge his Sphere of Action, beyond the Bounds which God had prescribed.

This Notion lets in Light upon the following Passage of *Job*: *Hell is naked before God, and Destruction hath no Covering. He stretcheth out the North over the empty Place, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing. The Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his Reproof. He divideth the Sea with his Power, and by his Understanding He smiteth through the Proud. By his Spirit the Heavens are garnished, and his Hand formed the crooked Serpent, Job xxvi. 6, &c.*

If we look no farther than the Surface; if we take the first Meaning that occurs; what a prodigious Downfall or *Anticlimax* is here at the Close of the Sentence, from *Garnishing Heaven* to the forming a *Crooked Serpent*? What Connexion is there? How little of a Piece is it with the rest of the Book, which contains an Assemblage of the noblest and most august Ideas? But if we look a little deeper,
the

SERM. VI. the Prospect clears up. In Opposition to the Idolatry of those Ages, which he takes Occasion to mention; *If I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in Brightness, and my Heart has been secretly enticed*, viz. to worship them: In Opposition, I say, to this early Idolatry, He asserts God to be the Maker of the Host of Heaven, which they worshipped. *By his Spirit he garnished the Heavens.* And in Opposition to the Belief of two *Independent Supreme Spirits*, the one the Author of Good, the other of Evil; He asserts, that *His Hand formed the crooked Serpent*; or, as the *Septuagint* renders it, the *Apostate Dragon*; the Old Serpent, the Devil; the Author of Evil, whom they set up as a Rival to the Creator. How pertinent and beautiful does the Text appear in this Light! From hence we may observe, that the Scripture, even in those very Passages where the Surface appears barren and unpromising, contains the richest Mines of Truth; which escape the Observation of common and hasty Readers. Agreeable to this Passage is that in *Isaiah*; where God is introduced speaking to *Cyrus King of Persia* by the Mouth of the Prophet: *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the Light, and create Darknefs: I make Peace, and create Evil; I make Peace (a temporal Blessing) and War (a temporal Evil) I the Lord do all these Things* * : Whereas you *Persians* adore two First Causes, the one the Origin of Light and Good, the other of Darknefs; I, in order to rectify your Notions, assure you, that *I alone do all these*; that there is no Evil without my Permission, no Good without my Concurrence.

* *Isai.* xlv. 6, 7.

Thus we see, that no Heathen Nation disbelieved the Existence of Evil Spirits; several carried their Notions of them too high, and aggrandized their Power too much.

We see, that, as the Scale of Beings descends from Man to Brute; from Brutes of a higher Species to those of a lower, to the smallest Insect; the higher Beings in each Link of the Chain have some Kind of Dominion and visible Authority over their immediate Inferiors; Man, for Instance, over Animals, &c. And, from that Harmony which runs through all God's Works, we may conclude; that as the Scale ascends from Man to Angels; they too have some Power and Prerogative over us, as we have over Brutes; and these again of an higher, over those of a lower, Species. This is probable from Analogy: and perhaps it is nothing but our Pride that inclines us to think, that *we*, who are suffered to exercise an unwarrantable Tyranny over, and to inflict useless Misery upon, Beings of a lower Class, should be intirely independent upon *Creatures* of a much higher Rank.

But the greatest Difficulty remains: How is it consistent with God's Goodness, or reconcileable to his Attributes, to suffer those Beings to possess the Bodies of Men, which was the Case of the *Demoniacs*, as well as to seduce their Minds?

To this the Reply is obvious: if God has suffered visible Beings to be the Executioners of his Vengeance upon us, why may not He suffer invisible Beings to be the Instruments of Evil to us? If God permits us to be harassed and devoured by wild Beasts, or aggrieved by Evil Men (more savage

SERM. sometimes than Beasts) why not by Wicked Demons
VI. and Accursed Spirits? If Diseases, and often Death,

are occasioned by *Natural* and *Material* Substances, why may they not by *Supernatural* ones? Nay, Invisible Beings are much fitter Instruments of God's Providence with Regard to us, than we can be with Regard to one another; as the Sphere of their Abilities is more enlarged, the Range of their Knowledge more extensive, and their Methods of Operation more expeditious.

There are several particular Cases, that cannot probably be brought about consistently with general Laws, or that uniform Method of acting whereby God steers the Universe. And if it be asked, why, in punishing the Bad, and chastising or trying the Good, God does not act immediately Himself? It may be sufficient to answer, that as God never calls in a *Supernatural* Power, where an *human* was sufficient, so He never exerts his *Omnipotence*, where an *Angelical* Power was equal to the Effect to be produced; or, in other Words, He never uses more Power or greater Means than are requisite.

In a Word, 'tis no Impeachment of God's Goodness to suppose; He suffers the nobler Parts of the Creation, *viz.* *Spiritual* Beings, to exert those Powers, which He has vested in them over inferior Creatures, provided He has set them their Bounds which they cannot pass; saying, *Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther*; provided He can bring Good out of Evil; blast their Designs, and make That end in the Benefit and Good of the *Whole*, which they designed for the Destruction of *particular* Persons.

If

If the Frequency of Persons *possessed* at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance (more than ever were heard of before or since) startle any Man; He may consider, that the *Jews* being, at that Juncture, extremely addicted to *Magical Arts*, had called in the Devil in an uncommon Manner, as well as deserted their God JEHOVAH, with whom they were in Covenant. He may consider, that they were then just *filling up the Measure of their Iniquities*; and accordingly, not long after, *Josephus*, their own Historian, assures us they were arrived at that Pitch of enormous Wickedness; that, if the *Romans* had not destroyed *Jerusalem*, He believes that God, by some exemplary Vengeance from Heaven, would have crushed them; and consumed their City, as He had those of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. That God should abandon and give them over unto *Satan*, who had thus abandoned Him and all Goodness, is not much to be wondered at. He may, lastly, consider, that *then* chiefly were the Powers of Darkness brought to Light, because *then* chiefly That Power exerted itself, which was able to bring their Deeds to Light.

This may account for the Frequency of *Demoniacs* in our Saviour's Time. God *then* suffered Evil Spirits to exert themselves more than usual, because then a Way was opened to fetch universal Good out of partial Evil; by proving to the *Jews*, that He who cast out *Devils* did not work his Miracles by the *Power of Devils*; and by demonstrating to the *Heathens*, that those Beings, whom they adored, were accursed Spirits, whom He dispossessed.

SERM. VI. A very ingenious Author * expresses his Surprise, that *Demoniacs* should be so frequent in *JUDÆA* in our Saviour's Time; whereas they never were heard of in other Nations, and *there* only at that particular Time. To which I answer, that here are two Mistakes as to Matter of Fact. *Demoniacs* were in other Nations besides *Judea*, as appears from *Thraseyllus*, an Author supposed to flourish in the Reign of *Tiberius*, who uses the very Word, which is rendered *Demoniacs*. But though they are not always distinguished by the Title of *Demoniacs* in profane Authors; yet they are very often mentioned with Appellations synonymous to it †. And whereas it is objected, that they are not mentioned in the History of the Bible before our Saviour's Time; not to insist on the Case of *Saul*, who was troubled with an Evil Spirit, the Omission may be easily accounted for, without supposing the Facts less frequent. For shall we suppose, that Persons, who had the *Dropsy*, and the *Palsy*, and *Lunatic*, were more frequent in our Saviour's Time, than any other? No certainly: Yet the Bible before our Saviour's Time seldom or never mentions, *Lunatics*, *Dropsical* Persons, or *Paralytiks* (though I apprehend those Distempers were very common) no more than it does *Demoniacs*. The Truth is; those Distempers were *not* mentioned in the *Old Testament*, because they were *not* then miraculously cured; and they *are* mentioned in the *New Testament*, only because they then *were* so. *Josephus*, however, supplies this Omission, and informs us, that,

* See The Works of JOSEPH MEDE, p. 28.

† Φοβόλητοι, Πύδωνες, Νυμφόλητοι, Θεοράγντοι
Nocturnis Diis Faunisque agitati; Lymphati, Cerriti, Larvati.

from the Time of *Solomon* down to his Own, there were many *Dæmoniacks* among the *Jews*. SERM. VI.

But supposing them more frequent about our Saviour's Time: Our Saviour could detect *Evil Spirits*, and make them confess themselves to be the Instruments in inflicting those Diseases which were commonly ascribed to, and often undoubtedly are the Result of, natural Causes. However that be, the Power of *dispossessing* Evil Spirits continued in the Church for three hundred Years, till the Establishment of Christianity by the Secular Power. This Fact was so undeniable, that *Tertullian*, in his *Apology* to the *Roman* Emperor, puts the very Truth of Christianity upon this Issue. His Words are these: "Let any One be produced before your Tribunal who is possessed by the *Devil*; being commanded by a Christian to speak what He is, He shall as certainly confess himself to be a *Devil*, as elsewhere he does falsely avow himself to be a *God*. Produce any other of these who profess to be *Inspired* by your *Gods*; if those pretended *Gods* do not confess themselves to be *Devils*, not daring to lye to a Christian; let the Blood of that audacious Christian be shed before you in that very Place. What is more manifest than this Experiment? more faithful than this Proof? Here is plain Evidence laid before you; here can be no Suspicion. Even say, that Magic, or some Fallacy is imposed upon you, if your Eyes and Ears will permit you." Thus *Tertullian*; and not only He: The main Current of the *primitive* Writers for three Centuries speak in the same Strain. They every one attest the Fact; they

SERM. vouch themselves to be Eye-witnesses of it; They

VI. appeal to the very Senses of their Adversaries. Here then is a Fact attested by Eye-witnesses, who could not be deceived themselves; who, if the Fact had been false, would never have exposed their Cause to so ready and easy a Confutation; themselves to Ridicule; and their Persons to the Rage of their Adversaries: A Fact attested by Men of Learning and undissembled Piety; which made their Testimony in Matters, that fell under the Cognizance of their Senses, uncontestable; by Men, that gave the utmost Test of their Honesty by dying for what they maintained. He, that can deny a Fact confirmed by such decisive Evidence, proves the Fact that He denies; proves that he is under the Influence of those Evil Spirits, whose Being and Operations he disowns. We cannot imagine a Set of Men would, for three hundred Years, at the Hazard of their Lives, persist in one uninterrupted Track of wilful unprofitable Lying, without one of them deviating into Truth.

If after the Propagation of Christianity there appear now no Traces of Possession among Christians, this is a Demonstration of the Truth of our Saviour's Prophecy: *Now shall the Prince of this World be cast out. I beheld Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven:* intimating that Evil Spirits should flee before the Propagators of Christianity as swiftly as Lightning, that darts from Heaven to Earth in a Moment. *The strong Man well armed kept his Palace, 'till a stronger than he, (our Saviour, who came to destroy the Works of the Devil,) spoiled him of his Goods; and stripped him of the Armour in which he trusted.* But

to argue as some do, because there are no Possessions SERM.
now by Evil Spirits, therefore there were none for- VI.
merly, is like that Monarch's Argument, who very
judiciously concluded, "That Water could not
freeze in *Europe*, because there was no such Thing
as Frost in the Country where he reigned." And
no Doubt he used several Arguments, which He
thought Demonstrations, to prove it impossible, that
the Particles of Water, which are loose, fluid, and
in perpetual Motion, should ever unite into such
Hardness and Solidity, that Men might walk upon
that Element, as upon dry Gound.

This it is to make our own narrow and scanty Com-
pass of Observation the Measure of all Truth! It can
never be proved, that there are no *Invisible Evil Beings*—
It can never be proved, that they have no Powers
beyond human Abilities, or even beyond the Compre-
hension of human Faculties—It can never be proved,
that they may not exert those Powers upon emergent
Occasions, as God, in his infinite Wisdom, thinks fit.
Unless we could comprehend the whole Extent of
Beings from him, who *dwelleth in unapproachable*
Glory, down to the most groveling Reptile; we can-
not understand what Reasons there may be, why the
Divine Administration should be carried on by the
Agency of Good and Bad Spirits. When once a
Thing is proved to be Fact, it follows, that what-
ever is, or has been, is right with Regard to God,
who permits or ordains it for the *Punishment of evil*
Doers; or for the Trial, Exercise, and Manifesta-
tion of Virtue in others.

Though the Power of Satan is abridged by Him,
who was to *bruise the Serpent's Head*; though he no

SERM. more acts in so open and undisguised a Manner upon
 VI. our Bodies; yet still he may influence our Minds, by
 acting upon the Scene of our Imagination; by sug-
 gesting wicked Ideas; and by offering Motives,
 that suit with our predominant Complexion; by al-
 luring the Covetous with Hopes of Gain, the Am-
 bitious with those of Honour, and the Voluptuous
 with the Prospect of Pleasure. And if any one now
 should assert, that those frightful Scenes of Vision
 obtruded upon our Fancies in our Dreams, in which
 the Soul is entirely passive (Scenes too regular
 for Chance, and never to be accounted for by the
 Laws of Matter and Motion) were produced by the
 Operation of Evil Spirits; it might open a Field of
 Raillery and Ridicule for a *Little Wit*; but the
 greatest Genius in the World could never confute the
 Assertion.

'Twas thus the Devil acted upon *Saul* by raising
 distempered, discontented Thoughts, and disturbing
 the Animal Oeconomy. And when *David's* Mu-
 sic had dispelled the melancholy Gloom, and sweet-
 ened the Temper; he, who had but a limited Power,
 finding all his further Efforts vain, fled away. And
 if even Creatures of our own Species can, by the
 masterly Strokes of their Pen, affect the Imagina-
 tion, and by well-wrought Scenes melt the Soul into
 Pity, and rouse it into Rage; how much more may
 we suppose it in the Power of Spirits, who know
 each Avenue to the Soul, to work upon the Fancy
 to brighten it into Joy, or overcast it with Melan-
 choly; and to convey what Imagery they please.

The Devil can indeed tempt us, but we ought to
 thank God, that He can do no more than tempt us;

that

that God, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation make a Way to escape, is more able and willing to assist us, than that Evil Spirit can be to seduce us. The Will is an impregnable Fortrefs, which he never storms by Assault, however he may think to undermine it by Sap. He can do just what wicked Men do, lay Temptations in our Way, but 'tis our own Fault if we comply with them. 'Tis ridiculous to deny, that he solicits us, alledging, that if He did, we should distinctly perceive his Workings. For 'tis his Interest to conceal himself. The Soul is susceptible of gentle, silent Impressions, as well as of violent Movements; and 'tis his *Finesse* and Dexterity to make us think we are following our own Inclinations, at the same Time that we are pushed forward by his Sollicitations. If we had distinct and evident Notices that he was operating upon us, we should start back with Horror.

What can be the Cause of those involuntary Representations, those hideous Appearances, that are forced upon us in Sleep? They must either proceed from Matter, from mere Mechanism of the Body, or from some Being that is not Matter. They cannot proceed from the former. For can mere Matter in Motion, an undesigning, unactive Cause be productive of Action and Design? Can mere Matter make us imagine we see Objects, that are not before our Eyes, and hear Words that are not spoken? Nay Words conveying certain distinct Ideas, Reason and Sentiment. Can undirected Matter put Questions to us, and return Answers? This must proceed from some Being that is not Matter, and therefore either from our own Soul, or some other intelligent

SERM. intelligent Being. Not from the Soul; for *here* it is
 VI, entirely *passive*; it does not *act*, but is acted upon.

It could not lay a Plot to terrify itself, and mistake what was its own Workmanship for a Reality. It would not, if it could prevent it, impose upon itself; and then suffer Misery from a delusive Scene. We groan under an imaginary Burden; — we suppose ourselves falling from Precipices; — we grapple with, or fly from an Enemy pursuing us with a drawn Sword. It looks then, as if some superior Being were at Work, forming Impressions, and drawing frightful Pictures upon the Fancy, when all the Inlets, by which external Objects have Admittance, are closed up.

And if such Beings, who have so great an Ascendant over the Imagination, were let loose upon us without Controul; how might they distract the Soul, overset it, and drive it to absolute Frenzy and Despair; by exhibiting to it the most ghastly Appearances they could form? But, Thanks be to God, whose over-ruling Hand curbs these Spirits, and restrains their Operations! So much Reason have we to pray to be delivered *from the Crafts and Assaults of the Devil*. I would not be thought to lay any great Stress upon this Argument. All that I contend for is, that it is a much stronger Proof *for* the Existence and Operation of Evil Spirits, than any that has hitherto been advanced *against* these Points.

But this leads me, in the Last Place, to make some Inferences, and so conclude.

We are conversant in the corporeal World from our Infancy. Sensible Objects make such early, repeated, strong Impressions, that it is sometimes difficult

ficult to let in, upon a Mind already immerfed in Matter, one Thought concerning immaterial Beings, through an immoderate Fear of *Superftition*. For Men talk and write, as if *that* was the only Evil to be dreaded at prefent. We run into *Sadducifm*; and left we fhould fuppose any Invfible Being *immediately* concerned, we affign vifible Causes, which are plainly unequal to the Effects produced. In order to remedy this, the Scripture has in Part drawn afide the Veil, and let us into the World of Spirits; undoubtedly the moft excellent and powerful, and perhaps the moft numerous, Part of the Creation. What is my Soul amidft fuch a Multitude of Spirits? No more than a Drop amidft the vaft Collection and Affemblage of Waters. It discovers to us the *Being* and *Offices* of Evil Spirits to excite our Caution; and the *Reality* and *Employment* of good Angels, to animate our Courage, and to raife our Ambition; for we *fhall be as the good Angels of God*. And if every green Leaf fwarms with Inhabitants undifcoverable by the naked Eye; if by the Help of Glaffes the Philofophers have discovered new Kingdoms, new Worlds of Beings within the old World; if the leaft Quantity of Water is peopled by Myriads of invifible, fenfible Creatures; it is no Enthuſiafm to think, that the *Spiritual* World, however undifcover'd, may bear fome Proportion to the *Senfible*; and that when we are alone, we are fo far from being in a forlorn Wild of dead unconſcious Matter, or furrounded only with Space, a lifelefs Void; that innumerable intellectual Beings may be hovering round us, Spectators of our Actions.

And

SERM.

VI.

And when this Body, the material Curtain, that is drawn between Us and the invible World of Spirits, is rent alunder; the Wicked may find a sudden Torrent of Light breaking in upon them; a Light more powerful, sharp, and piercing, than even those Pains, which dissolved the vital Union, and divorced the Soul from the Body. He may find himself under the Arrest and Custody of Evil Angels, to be thrust down into Places of Horror and Despair; as, what we learn from the Parable of *Lazarus*, the Good are conveyed, by a Guard of Angels, to Places of Light and Bliss.

To enlarge our Conceptions let us suppose, that, in a spacious Theatre where a thousand Lights are burning, one is inclosed in a little Cell of Earth, just as our Spirit in the Body. While it is inclosed, its Beams strike only on its own narrow Prison, and it has no Communion with those without. But let this Cell be broken down, it has full Communion, with all those thousands, and joins its social Beams with theirs. Thus it shall be when the Body is put off, and the Soul enlarged from its Prison. It shall find itself among Millions of Spirits to which it was a Stranger whilst immersed in Flesh, itself a Kindred Spirit.

zdy, When any wicked Suggestion, into which we are led by no Discourse, without any foregoing Chain of thinking, without any preceding Train of Ideas, arises in our Minds, we know not how, or from what Quarter, by a sudden Impulse; let us reject it immediately with Abhorrence.

The Scripture never makes it an Excuse, or considers it as an alleviating Circumstance, that we were seduced

seduced by a powerful Tempter ; on the contrary, it makes it an Aggravation of the Crime, that we did not dismiss with Abhorrence, a Suggestion, which we might reasonably conclude, from the Nature and Tendency of the Thing, proceeded from an evil Spirit. Thus St. Peter rebukes Ananias severely : *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost ?*

The Suggestion may indeed arise from the grand Author of Evil, and so far we are not culpable. But if we cherish and entertain it, we make it our own. The Offspring might be originally his ; but if we adopt it, it becomes our own legitimate Child. And when any good Thought springs up, let us look upon it as a Beam of Light darting in upon our Minds from some good Angel, or even from the *Father of Lights*. Let us improve, cultivate, and ripen it, till it breaks forth into correspondent Actions.

Lastly, Let us lay it to Heart what a Misery it must be, to dwell for ever and ever with those accursed Beings, our Tempters here, our Tormentors hereafter ; in whom there reigns one genuine Blackness of Malice, without the least Beam of Benevolence shed abroad in their Minds : as, on the other Hand, what an Happiness it must be, to have for ever our Conversation with those glorified and ennobled Spirits, the immediate Attendants on the Throne of God ; bright as the Sun, and numerous as the Stars ; in a Place where no Malice, no Rancour, no Pain will find Admittance ; but Love unallayed, and the Fullness of Bliss uninterrupted, will reign for ever and ever.

SERMON VII.

Curiosity in unnecessary Matters censured and condemned.

JOHN XXI. 22.

If I will, that He tarry till I come, what is that to Thee? Follow Thou me.

SERM.
VII.

THESE Words contain our Saviour's significant Rebuke to St. Peter's curious Inquiry, what would become of that Disciple whom Jesus loved? "If I will that He live till my coming to the Destruction of Jerusalem, that does not at all concern you. Your great Concern is to follow Me; to obey my Precepts, and believe my Doctrines; all other Knowledge, but what relates to your Happiness, is impertinent and vain. That is enough, without launching out into foreign Inquiries, to engross your Time, and demand your whole Attention."

Indeed it was our Saviour's general Method when any curious and unconcerning Question was proposed, instead of answering it directly, to strike off into some Point of general Use and Importance that had a Connection with it. Thus when he was asked, "Are there few that be saved?" Instead of gratifying an idle Curiosity, He commands them to lay

out

out their Endeavour, that they may be of that Number, whatever it be: *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate, &c.* When the Question was put to Him: "Who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" He, instead of answering them, set a Child before them, and told them, that except they had the Simplicity and Humility of Children, *they should in no wise enter into it.* Instances of this Procedure are endless; therefore I shall mention only one more: "Lord, did this Man" (whose Soul we suppose præ-existed before it entered the Body) "sin, or His Parents, that He was born blind?" Here a Philosopher, full of Himself, and of His unedifying Notions, would have been glad of an Opportunity to have expatiated upon a Speculative Point, and to have given a decisive Verdict in Favour of, or against a Præ-existence of Souls: Our Saviour, who always looked upon such Speculations as foreign to the main Point in View, leaves the Question as He found it, undetermined; but gives them to understand, that whatever Evils God suffered to take Place upon particular Persons, they were always productive of some great and general Good. *Neither did this Man sin, nor his Parents;* "This Blindness was not occasioned either by this Man's Vices, or his Parents, but was permitted, that the Glory of God might be manifested in Him." Give me Leave therefore to shew,

Ist, The Folly, Absurdity, and dangerous Consequences of an over-curious Pursuit of Knowledge, any farther than as it relates to Happiness.

Illy,

SERMON
VII.

Udly, To consider the Goodness of God in bounding our Knowledge, and shortening our Prospect,

*W*hen our Understanding has its Boundaries; and when it is arrived at it's full Growth and Height, we cannot, how much Thought soever we may take, add one Cubit to the Size and Statute of it. We may shorten the Line of our Knowledge, as we may do that of our Lives, by our own Default; but we cannot lengthen the Line of it, any more than we can that of our Lives, beyond the Period assigned by God. The greatest and the least Objects equally baffle our Inquiries. Too great and disproportioned an Object embarrasses and oversets the Understanding; too little a one eludes and escapes our Notice. It is God alone, whose Almighty Power nothing, however great, can encumber; whose Infinite Wisdom, nothing, however little, can escape. Our main Knowledge is to know ourselves; what we are at present as to our inward State, Temper and Frame of Mind; whether we have those Habits which are the Groundwork of our future Hopes. By looking often into ourselves, and knowing thoroughly what we are at present; we may know what we are to be hereafter. And yet Those who have but little Time to spare, will spend it in any Thing sooner than in reading, or hearing read, those Books which may shew them the Way to their true Happiness; — why they came into this World, — and what may be their Condition in another. As to other Things, who is there that can answer all the Questions, I will not say, which God puts to Job in the XXXVIIIth Chapter, but which may be asked

asked him by the very next Idiot that he meets? SERM.
VII.
Some are so eager to know what is meant by the ob-
scurer Parts of Scripture, that they never put in
Practice the plainer Precepts of it; which if they
did, it would signify little or nothing whether they
understood the obscurer Parts or no.

Prefumptuous Man! wouldst thou thoroughly un-
derstand the Manner in which Three Persons exist in
the same unbounded Essence of the Deity? Before
thou strivest to fathom the Nature of the Greatest of
all Beings, first, if thou canst, comprehend how the
least of all Beings, an Animal an hundred times less
than a Mite, does exist. — Myriads of such Ani-
mals as can only be discerned by the Help of Glas-
ses. If the whole Body be so minute as to be un-
discoverable by the naked Eye, how much less must
be the Limbs whereof that whole Body is compoun-
ded? How much less still must be the Veins, the
Blood in those Veins, the Animal Spirits in that
Blood, till we approach to the very Border of no-
thing? For yet This Animal contains in Miniature
all those Parts which we have in larger Dimensions.
In short, for one Thing that we can plausibly ac-
count for in the Book of Nature, there are Millions
of Things of which we can give no account at all.
Yet we, who find almost all Things so puzzling and
unaccountable in the Book of Nature, expect every
Thing in the Book of Grace, which proceeds from
the same Author, should be plain and level to our
Capacities.

Most of the Objections against Scripture proceed
from hence, that we set up for Free-Thinkers in
Cases where we can be but Half-Thinkers at least,

SERM. or even less than that; as wanting a great many
 VII. Ideas, that are necessary to be taken into the Account to make our Reasonings just, full and exact. Strange Free-Thinkers who will not believe what they cannot comprehend! As well might they think that the Horizon, which determining their Prospect, was the Boundary of the Universe; as that their Understanding was the Measure of all Truth. They must not believe they think at all, unless they first could comprehend (what is impossible) by what Springs the thinking Being is put in Motion; or how the Body acts upon the Soul, and the Soul upon the Body; upon which their Thinking at present, in a great measure depends.

The Truth of the Matter is; We are Beings designed for Action, not for Speculation. This Life is the proper Sphere of Action; the next is that of Knowledge. *Here we see through a Glass darkly, but there, in a future State, Face to Face. Here we know in Part, but there we shall know even as we are known.* If you make it your Business here to lay in a Stock of Knowledge, without putting it in Practice; there remains after this Life no farther Opportunity to acquire virtuous Habits. But if you make it your main Purpose of Living to acquire and cultivate virtuous Habits, your Thirst of Knowledge will be fully gratified hereafter. Be virtuous here, you will be knowing hereafter. If you neglect Virtue here, that great Work must be undone for ever. Why then should any Man be over-industrious to purchase, with much Trouble and Expence, that Estate of Knowledge, which, as soon as one weak, dropping Life expires, will of Course, except it

it is his own Fault, fall to him without any Trouble or Expence at all?

The Sum of what I would say is this, the only Opportunity we have of being Good is *now*; the main Opportunity of being Knowing is in a Life to come. Yet if we may judge from the Practice of the World, one would imagine they were in a different Way of Thinking: for there were never more Scholars, and perhaps never fewer *good* Scholars. Hence so many Men seem to value some Branches of Knowledge just as others do some Kinds of Food; merely because they are *rare* and *uncommon*, not because they are *substantial*, *nourishing*, and *useful*: Their *Difficulty* and *Obscurity*, not their *Serviceableness* to the World, stamp a Value upon them. Hence their Heads resemble those Cabinets that are stored with useless Rarities and curious Trifles; fit for Shew and Ostentation, not for any valuable Purposes of Life. Hence no Hours are sometimes more idly spent than those which are employed in Reading. I will not except those which are employed in reading Books of Morality, if our *Studies* intirely terminate in a barren Knowledge of those Truths, without endeavouring to acquire those Habits and Dispositions which are inculcated by moral Treatises. When Men retire into their Closets to form Rules for the Conduct of Life, to examine into themselves, to reform their Manners, and subdue their Passions, they will come out much better Men than they went in: But if they go thither merely to furnish themselves with Materials for Conversation, to get a Set of Notions floating in the Head, without sinking deep into,

SERM. and influencing, their Heart, they only heighten
 VII. their Vanity, they swell and puff up the Mind, they
 do not fill it with *Food convenient* for it.

Hence we may account for the strange Conduct of some very thoughtful Men. It has staggered a great many to find Men of distinguished Abilities, who have laid out their Lives in the Research of Knowledge, either doubting of almost every Thing, or professing a determined Disbelief of those great and fundamental Truths, which the rest of the World have held sacred and unquestionable. And they are still more staggered to observe, that they have the Character of good, moral Men; that is, Men free from the glaring Vices of Sensuality, Incontinence and Dishonesty. Now let it be considered that Men, generally speaking, have seldom more than one strong predominant Vice; that the main Test of our Goodness consists, not in relinquishing Vices which we have no Relish for, but in sacrificing that predominant Vice to the Love of Virtue. Men that have sequestered themselves from the World to meditate in Solitude and Retirement, have no strong Bias to Intemperance, Sensuality, or Dishonesty. Vices that are inconsistent with a Life devoted to Study. The *sin that easily besets* them is a splenetic Pride, Discontent, a Spirit of Opposition, a Desire to be distinguished by new Discoveries, a Fondness for their own singular Notions, in which they imagine they have a Property exclusive of the rest of the World. And it is as difficult for them to get the better of this Desire of Distinction, as it is for others to conquer their Love of Riches,

Riches, Pleasure, or Honour. What an inordinate SERM.
 Love of Pleasure, Money, or Power is to several VII.
 in active Life, inducing them to take up with a 
 Set of such Opinions as may countenance their vi-
 cious Practices; That Pride, Spleen, and a De-
 sire of Distinction are to several speculative Men,
 prompting them to advance such Doctrines as few
 or none have maintained before them; and which, it
 were to be wished, few or none would maintain after
 them. And it is Matter of Fact, that the greatest
 Absurdities have in all Ages been advanced by Men of
 the greatest Parts, who had an overweening Conceit
 of themselves. It seems to be something providen-
 tial, that those who trusted too much to the Strength
 of their Reason, should always be Proofs of the
 Weakness of it. In a Word, whatever uncommon
 Abilities they may have, yet, like *Sampson*, when
 God, from whom all our Sufficiency cometh, leav-
 eth them to themselves, their Strength departs from
 them, and they become weak like other Men.

To obviate any ill Impressions which ill Authors
 may make, it is sufficient for the Bulk of Mankind
 to reflect, that those Schemes must be false and ill-
 grounded, which leave Men in a worse State, upon
 the Foot of the Account, than they found them in
 with Regard to Happiness, though they may not
 have Capacity or Leisure to unravel their studied
 Sophistry: that the best-natured Being could not form
 a Wish more advantageous to Mankind, than that
 the Doctrines of Christianity, those strong Incentives
 to Virtue, should be universally believed, and it's
 Precepts universally practised. Now what is neces-
 sary to the Happiness of the World must be true.

SERM. For though private, partial Good and Truth may

VII. often interfere; yet public, general Good and

Truth always keep close together. There must be a true Harmony and strict Correspondence between them, as long as there is a Being of infinite Goodness at the Helm. For a Being, who wills the Happiness of Mankind, must will whatever is conducive to the general Good; and what He, the Author of Truth, *wills*, must be founded upon Truth. The proper Answer then to these pernicious Books is; "What Good to the World do you propose by them? Will they make us better Parents? more dutiful Children? more tender Husbands? more acceptable to God? more serviceable to our Fellow-creatures? For the same Reason that we are resolved to be of any Religion, we are resolved to be of the best: and we see none that can come in Competition with Christianity, which contains stronger Motives to true Holiness than any other Religion before had, and as strong as any other can have."

Men may extol as much as they please, fine exalted and superior Sense; but plain Common Sense, exerted with Caution and Industry, and attended with Humility, is a much surer Guard against any fatal Errors in Religion, or Miscarriages in civil Life, than the most distinguished Brightness of Parts, and Vivacity of Imagination, when accompanied with an over-bearing Pride. For that very Vivacity sometimes may make Men too impatient to go to the Bottom of Things; or they often start so much Game, in the wide and spacious Field of Thinking, that they overtake none. The Edge
of

of their Mind is *fine*, but soon *turned* by any Thing that is hard and knotty. Whereas a Man of fewer Ideas, but who lays them in Order, and compares and examines them, going Step by Step in the Pursuit of Truth in a gradual Chain, makes up by Industry, Care and Caution, whatever he wants in Quickness and Readiness of Parts. Just as in Business the most mercurial and volatile Spirits are seldom so successful as Men of much meaner Capacities; but who are withal more judicious, wary, and attentive.

Yet those are the Men that are generally meddling with Things that are too high for them; that overlook the plain and obvious Truths of Christianity, merely because they are so; and are continually grasping at Things to which their Capacities are not suited. He who, upon the bare Proposal of such curious Questions, should, without further Consideration, immediately declare, that he knows *nothing* at all of the Matter; has in a Moment made as great Advances in the Knowledge of them, as he who hath exhausted his Spirits, and impaired his Health, in attempting to sound the Depth of them. It is observable, that, of all Subjects but one, a general Knowledge is commonly sufficient. Whoever descends into little minute Particularities, his Knowledge, as far as those Points are concerned, is unintelligible to the Bulk of Mankind, and useless almost to all. And He may be compared to those, who observed a nice Punctuality in little insignificant Trifles, at the same Time that they neglected the weightier Matters, that were of Use and Importance to all. There is one Subject only,

SERM. VII. namely, Ourselves, that requires a minute, particular Survey, without suffering any Thing, how small soever, to escape our Notice. And this is a Subject that we generally decline. We are content here to be *Coasters* only; we cruise about the Shore, without ever piercing into the *Inland Parts* of the Country.

In other Subjects it is a Question, whether we err oftener by thinking *too little*, or by thinking *too much*. We may pursue our Speculations so far, till we lose Sight of Common Sense. Nay some, by too intense an Application to Things beyond their Sphere, have unhinged their Understanding. And when they had launched into the Deep, and were endeavouring to bring from the immense Ocean of Knowledge a large Draught of Intellectual Food, like the Fishermen's in the Gospel, the *Net* which contained it was *broken*. I mean, the curious Network of the Brain has been disturbed, and all their Labour lost.

I proceed, *Illy*, To consider the Goodness of God, in thus bounding our Knowledge, and shortening our Prospect.

For my Part, I think the Divine Goodness as much displayed in our *Ignorance* of many Things, as in our *Knowledge* of others. I thank the Deity for what He has concealed from us, as well as what He has revealed to us. Though we have not Extent of Line enough to sound the Depths of Knowledge, yet we have enough to find our Rocks and Shelves, and thereby to avoid them. 'Tis with the

Faculties

Faculties of the Mind as with the Senses of the Body; they are both exactly suited to the Exigencies of Life, and the Business we have to do here. Were our Sense of Hearing some Degrees more acute than it is, we should be disturbed by the least Noise: We should be no more able to sleep, or meditate in Retirement, than in the midst of a Storm; the least Breath of Air, the least Whisper, might be incommodious. If our Sense of Feeling were more delicate, the slightest Touch would give us exquisite Sensations of Pain; our Torments would increase too in Proportion to our Sensibility. And indeed all the Senses, which are now so many Inlets of Pleasure, would, by being quickened and heightened to any considerable Degree in our present Condition, become so many Avenues of Anguish. Were our Eye-sight greatly sharper, we should be quite in another World; Objects that now seem smooth and beautiful, would appear rugged, uneven, and unsightly, as they do through Microscopes. A more improved State of the Faculties of the Mind would be attended with the same Inconveniences. It is with the Mind as with the Eye; too much Light would be as useless, as too much Darkness. Therefore the Deity has given both of them just such a Portion of Light as is suited to our present Situation in Life. If we were, for Instance, able to pry into the Depths of Futurity, and foresee what was to befall us, what would be the Consequence? That we should be extremely miserable; that we should torment ourselves before the Time, by the Dread of future Evils; and lessen every Joy by anticipating it. Heaven therefore has, in Mercy to us, locked up

from

SERM. from us the Book of Fate, and only laid open to us
 VII. that Part which concerns us at present. Again,

We might think it would be of great Advantage to us to be able to penetrate into the Thoughts, and discover before-hand the Designs Men are forming against us. But if each Man could discern what passed within another's Mind, as well as He did what was in his own, were every Thing there laid open as much to one another as it is to *Him with whom we have to do*; we should discover often such forbidding Images, such unfavourable Sentiments, that we should, several of us, become insupportable to one another. Farther,

We might wish to have the Curtain drawn, and a fuller View of another World presented to us. But God conceals from the Good a distinct, explicit Account of the Advantages that will accrue to them after Death, that they might still endure Life, and all it's Inconveniences. And so in a thousand other Instances.

There is a Point in Knowledge where *Use* ends, and mere *Curiosity* begins. As far as any Thing is useful and important; so far all is generally Light and Clearness. Beyond that all is Darkeness, or at least one undistinguished Blank. The Reason is, God has drawn a Veil over this Part of Knowledge, lest we should be distracted with a Multiplicity of Ideas, and diverted from useful and practical Enquiries, by attending to Matters of mere Speculation. To exemplify this in the Point of the *Redemption*, the grand and fundamental Doctrine of Christianity; some People complain of a Darkeness spread over the Face of this Dispensation. But as far as it

is a Doctrine of Use and Importance, so far it is clearly and distinctly revealed. We are expressly told what our Saviour has purchased for us, and what we have to do for ourselves, to qualify us for these Blessings. It is revealed to us, that God thro' his Merits will confer that *exceeding and eternal Weight of Bliss* upon every penitent Sinner, to which even the unoffending, who *need no Repentance*, could have no Title. So far it is a Doctrine of solid Use and Importance. But we want perhaps more fully to know the internal Nature, Manner, and particular Efficacy of his Merits and Intercession, and the whole Transaction between the Father and the Son in the stupendous Work of *our Salvation*: *here* mere Curiosity commences; and therefore no Wonder our Knowledge should in some Measure end.

These are the Things which *Angels desire to look into*; and we, till we are Angels, should not expect a full and comprehensive Satisfaction about them. A Man may know a Matter of Fact, that he is ransomed from Captivity and Slavery by a glorious Sovereign, without knowing particularly, explicitly and fully the Kind, Manner, and Value of the Ransom that was laid down, and the Price with which he was bought. No: let Angels and Arch-Angels *desire to look into*, and contemplate the Nature of our Redemption: Let Man be humbly content to enjoy the Benefits of it: Enough for him to know, that Scripture proves, and Reason cannot disprove, the Doctrine.

To conclude, let us all be convinced, that in the *deep Things of God*, to reason *rightly* is to submit our Reason to the Wisdom of God. We then,
and

SERM.
VII.

and not till then, are growing wise; when we begin to discern how weak and foolish we are. An absolute Perfection of Understanding is impossible: But He makes the nearest Approaches to it, who has the Sense to discern, and the Humility to own it's Imperfections.

SERMON

To conclude, let us all be convinced, that in the deep Things of God, to reason rightly is to submit our Reason to the Will of God. We then

SERMON VIII.

Delight in GOD the Origin and Perfection of human Pleasure.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

Delight Thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give Thee the Desires of thine Heart.

PLEASURE, or the Enjoyment of our *Heart's Desire*, being the chief Spring of Action in Man; the due Regulation of our Pursuits of it must always be of great Moment; and whoever addresseth us with an Offer of This Kind, will justly demand, and can scarce fail of engaging, our Attention. Now such a Proposal the *Psalmist* here makes to us all; directing our *Pursuits* after Pleasure to the great *Source* of it, and informing us, that the sure Method of attaining *the Desire of our Hearts*, is to *delight in the LORD*. Which important Truth I shall accordingly at present endeavour to make out by shewing, how all our *Pleasures* point out to us, and are improved by, a *Delight in GOD*.

And this I shall illustrate more particularly with Regard, First, to the Pleasures of *Sense* and of *Imagination*; and then, to those *Moral* and *Intellectual* Pleasures, of *Benevolence* towards others, and of *Hope* and *Expectation* for ourselves.

SERM.
VIII.

To

SERM.

VIII.

To begin with *Sensual Pleasures*. Even these, though the lowest in the Scale of Enjoyment, should however always put us in Mind, who it is that gives us all the Objects we enjoy, and the very Power of enjoying them: Otherwise we shall deserve those severe Rebukes, which GOD gives the *Israelites* by the Prophet *Isaiah*; *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And again, *The Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts: but they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operation of His Hands.* It seems, they could enjoy the Accommodations and Gratifications of Life, without ever carrying their Thoughts upwards to that Being, who openeth his Hand, and filleth all Things living with Plenteousness.

And how justly may those among ourselves fall under the same Condemnation, who either profanely neglect, or thoughtlessly forget, to crave the Divine Blessing upon their Food, and to return Thanks to Him for it! A Duty enforced by the Example and constant Practice of our Blessed Saviour; who (not to mention several other Instances) took the seven Loaves, and the two Fishes, and gave Thanks; a Duty exemplified by St. Paul, when, as we read, *He took Bread, and gave Thanks before them all; as well as recommended by his express Declaration, where, speaking of Meats which (as He tells us) GOD hath created to be received with Thanksgiving, He adds; For every Creature of GOD is Good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of GOD (which has abolished the*
Distinction

Distinction of Meats) and Prayer. And in another Place, *He that eateth, eateth to the LORD; for he giveth GOD Thanks.* But because the Example of *Confucius* may weigh more with some Men than that of *St. Paul*, let me add, what is observed of him; that He never eat any Thing but he first prostrated himself, and offered it to the Supreme LORD of Heaven. In like Manner, *Whether we eat or drink, let us do all to the Glory of GOD.* This will ennoble and improve our carnal Gratifications, and exalt them into religious Acts of Gratitude and Love.

And indeed, it is the Mixture of some *Moral Pleasure* that gives the most agreeable Relish to *Sensible Pleasures*: Some grateful Reflection on the *Person who bestows* them; or some benevolent Thoughts towards *those* with whom *we share* them. To *sare sumptuously every Day* would be a very sordid Indulgence, and of slender Estimation, when intirely unaccompanied by a Temper thankful to the Author of every good Gift, and hospitable to our Fellow-creatures. It is this that must give a Refinement and Delicacy to our Pleasures, that must qualify that Grossness which would otherwise render them nauseating and distasteful; and that must make every Repast a rational Entertainment.

What should farther be a strong *Motive* with us in this Respect to *delight in GOD* is, that He has forbidden us no Enjoyment, ordinarily speaking, but what, upon the Whole, will bring more Pain than Pleasure; nor has he enjoined us any Duty but what, all Things considered, will yield us greater Degrees of Pleasure than of Pain. True indeed it is, that the great Duty of *Repentance* does, in the Nature of it, imply

SERM. imply Sorrow. But then this Sorrow is productive
VIII. of, and succeeded by, a lasting substantial Joy.

Though our Reformation has its Pangs, yet we shall
no more remember the Anguish, for Joy that a new Man
is born into the World.

If that Variety of Natural Evils which appear in
the World, and continually break in upon Men's
Enjoyment of sensual Pleasures, should be thought
any Objection against what has been advanced in Re-
commendation of the Duty of *Delighting in GOD*;
let it be remembered, that Natural Evils, such as
Pain, Sickness, and Calamity, are graciously de-
signed by GOD as Moral Goods, by making us re-
flect and think; by teaching us Patience and Refig-
nation; and by weaning our Affections from Things
below. Every Branch that beareth not Fruit, He ta-
keth away; and every Branch that beareth Fruit, He
purgeth, or pruneth, that it may bring forth more Fruit:
That is, by some painful Operation, which beareth
a Resemblance to pruning, He maketh every Good
Man more Good; as the Branch that bore Fruit
before, becometh more fruitful, and deriveth new
Strength and additional Vigour from the very Steel.
So that, in short, those Restraints on Account of
which Religion may, at first Sight, appear to be an
Enemy to sensual Gratification, are in Fact Instances
of Her real Friendship to it. Even Self-denial is en-
joined by GOD as the best Preservative of Self-enjoy-
ment; since to enjoy ourselves we must learn to curb
our Appetites: And all seeming Severity is really In-
dulgence upon the Whole. But farther: against all

Things that are contrary to the Pleasure of Pain. True indeed it is, that the
Pain of Repentance does, in the Nature of it, From
imply

From the Pleasures of the *Senses* let us proceed one SERM.
Step higher to those of the *Imagination*. And these VIII.
are chiefly *Beauty, Grandeur and Novelty*.

As for the First: If the *Beauty* of the visible World affect us, let us consider, Who it is, that has poured out this Beauty upon the Creation, Himself infinitely more beautiful, lovely, and glorious; while He stands unseen behind the Workmanship of His own Hand:

We cannot unravel any one Thing in the *Drama* of Nature, without bringing a GOD upon the Scene. Every Thing *material* convinceth us, that there is, and must be, something *immaterial* behind the Curtain.

When we see the Sun shine forth in his Lustre, and Nature appearing in it's most advantageous Dress, how can we avoid turning our Thoughts upwards toward that Being, whose *Handy-work* that Sun *shews*, and *whose Glory it declares*, in a Language understood by all Mankind! a Language, *the Sounds whereof are gone into all Lands, and its Words into the Ends of the World.* Every Field, every Flower, contains the most powerful, the most edifying, Rhetorick to excite in Us the Love of that Being, who *bath clothed the Lilies of the Field* with that elegant Simplicity, which was superior to Solomon's Pomp, when *arrayed in all his Glory.* An unthinking Mind, or a Mind that is immersed in Sensuality, may, without any Emotions of Gratitude or Piety, survey the delightful Round of the Seasons, and the rich Furniture of the Earth, together with that numerous Family of living Creatures, for whose common Benefit the universal Parent has designed it: A Man of this Turn

SERM. may, I say, behold that Variety of Scenes which diversify the Face of the Creation, and present the most agreeable Images to the Mind, with a tasteless Indifference and Coldness to that Being, who has poured out such Stores of His Bounty upon it. But He, who will be at any Expence of Thinking, will *ponder these Things*, till, by repeated Reflections, *the Fire is kindled* towards HIM, who has enriched the World with such a Profusion of Good; has beautified it with such Order and Harmony; and has ennobled it with such astonishing Magnificence and Grandeur.

Which puts me in Mind of the *Second Pleasure* of the Imagination, arising from *Greatness*.

The Soul is naturally formed for the Love of what is great and marvellous. An august and stupendous Building; a spacious and unbounded Prospect; the unmeasurable Expanse of the Creation; naturally raise the Soul into an unusual Elevation, and fill it with sublime and vast Ideas. Now this Desire of surveying what is great, solemn and majestick, was probably stamped upon our Nature for This very Purpose, that we might take Delight in contemplating Him, of whose Greatness there is *no End*. If we are struck into a pleasing Astonishment at the View of any Thing grand and magnificent; If our Astonishment rises higher in Proportion to the greater Magnificence of the Object; it must be improved into the highest Pitch, when we have a direct and immediate Knowledge of HIM, whose Essence is higher than Heaven, and deeper than Hell, the Measure whereof is broader than the Sea, and longer than the Earth. Every Body knows, we hate no-
thing

thing more than Confinement in a Prospect : The Soul loves to have a free and unlimited Range. And if even here, under all the Inconveniences of the Body, the Soul expresses such a strong Desire for Infinity ; how much more will it delight therein, when unembarrassed by any Clogs or Impediments of Matter ?

SERM.
VIII.

The next Pleasure of the Imagination is That which is excited by *Novelty*.

How comes it to pass, that we are generally in Pursuit of something New ; and yet, when we are possessed of it, and the Object becomes familiar to us, it fades and languishes in our Eye, and palls upon the Sense ? Does not Nature, by the repeated Proofs of the Unsatisfactoriness of Things here below, admonish us to fix our Rest upon *Him*, who alone can satisfy, and even exceed our Wishes ? Whom the more we know, the more amiable we shall find Him, and find no End of his Perfections.

The Deity is to human Minds what the Ocean is to narrow Vessels. They may receive some imperfect Notices ; They may take in as much as their scanty Dimensions will admit ; and yet there will remain an infinite Surplus still, which we want Room to receive ; wishing that human Nature was advanced to an higher Perfection, that the Divine Nature might be better understood, more perfectly loved, and more worthily praised.

Why, in short, does the Fancy generally paint Things beyond the Life ? Why does the Happiness proposed from Earthly Objects seldom or never answer that lively Imagery and gay Colouring in which

SERM.
VIII.

we had represented them? Has not the Deity so ordered it; that nothing here should fully equal our Expectations, but that the Powers and Extent of the Imagination should go beyond the Reality of Things; for this very Reason, that we might fix our Thoughts upon those Objects, the Reality and Perfection of which shall exceed the utmost Stretch of the Imagination, and which *it hath not entered into the Heart of Man to conceive?*

From the Pleasures of the *Imagination*, let us proceed to those of a *Moral* and *Intellectual* Nature. And first let us consider the Pleasures of *Benevolence*.

If we are of *Benevolent* Dispositions; if it is a Pleasure to us to please others, and to see them happy; how must we delight in That Being, who is infinitely great and happy in His own Nature, and infinitely good and communicative of Happiness to His Creatures! How must we rejoice in the Thought, that the Universe is under His Administration, who will make Virtue triumphant, who will not inflict Misery upon any one Individual, any farther than is necessary for the Good of the Whole! But above all, what generous and liberal Thoughts shall we cherish of that Person, who throughout his Life made Virtue appear what it is, a lovely Form; and by his Death made *Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World!*—How must it heighten our Benevolence to Man, as well as our Love to GOD, to think, that all those whom we wish well to, shall, upon the easy Terms of Faith and Repentance, be *Heirs of GOD, and Joint-heirs with CHRIST*; no Dregs of Guilt remaining to defile the pure Current of their Happiness,

ness, no Storms of Adversity or Misfortune to disturb or ruffle it ! These are the genuine Consequences of a Relish for Benevolence, as well as proper Incentives to the Love of GOD.

No Doubt, our highest Affection, in the Reason of the Thing, is a Tribute due to GOD considered as the highest Good. Yet it must also be granted, that dry and abstracted Reasons of Love operate very faintly, unless we take into the Account those affecting Considerations of His being our Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and universal Benefactor and Parent. For this Cause the Scripture tells us, *we love GOD because He first loved us.* His Internal and *Essential* Excellency may claim our Admiration, and convince the Understanding, that we ought to love Him ; but His *Relative* Dignity, his making, preserving and redeeming us, touch the inmost Springs and Movements of our Nature, and powerfully work upon the Will and Passions, the two active Principles in the Mind of Man.

Let then, O Man, thy labouring Soul strive to conceive (for 'tis impossible to express) what an immense Debt of Gratitude thou owest to Him, who, by His Creating Goodness, called Thee out of Nothing to make Thee a Partaker of Reason, and even a Sharer of Immortality with Himself : Who, by his Preserving Goodness, designs to conduct Thee safe through the various Stages of thy Eternal Existence ; And who, by his Redeeming Goodness, hath prepared for Thee an Happiness too big for the Comprehension of an human Understanding. Canst Thou receive such Endearments of Love to Thee and all Mankind with Insensibility and Coldness ?

SERM. Shouldst Thou treat a tender Parent with an undutiful Behaviour, we would call Thee an unnatural Monster; shouldst Thou treat a generous Benefactor with a disobliging Behaviour, we would call Thee base and ungrateful: Nay, shouldst Thou use a brute Creature, which expressed his Kindness in the most significant Manner he could, with Cruelty, we would brand Thee with the Names of unmerciful and hard-hearted. But in the whole Compass of Languages what Word is expressive enough to paint the black Ingratitude of That Man, who is unaffected by, and entirely regardless of, the Goodness of his Creator, and the Mercies of his Saviour? Did He, the *Lord of Life and Glory*, condescend to make the first Advances of Love and Friendship to us; and shall not we cherish an affectionate Remembrance, and a grateful Resentment of these His invaluable Favours?

On the other Hand, what a delightful Complacency must diffuse itself over the Mind of Him, who has the least Tincture of Good-will to the Universe, to consider, that what he wished is brought about, the Happiness of the whole Universe of rational Creatures, if it is not their own Fault; and to think at the same Time that he himself is in the happy Number of them? To reflect, that He, who *spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for our Sakes, will with him also freely give us all Things*, must beget in us a *Delight* in Him, of whom are all Things as He is our Creator, through whom are all Things as He is our Preserver, and to whom are all Things as He is our Final Happiness and Sovereign Good.

But this leads me from the Pleasures of *Benevolence* to consider those of *Hope* and *Expectation*.

Now

Now present Hope is present Good ; and a certain *Expectation* of future Blessings is in some Measure a *Blessing in Hand*. Hope is the great Cordial that must sweeten Life, and make the nauseous Draught go down. We are indigent Creatures, insufficient of ourselves for our own Happiness, and therefore ever seeking it somewhere else. But, *where to seek it ?* there is the Question. The Thoughtful and Pensive, who are Enemies to the Vanities of Life, are eaten up with (what is the greatest Vanity of all) a perpetual *Vexation of Spirit* ; unless they direct their Thoughts to, and *cast their Care upon, GOD* : No : If there were not another Life, our Business would be, not to *alarm* the thinking Faculty, but to *lull* our too too unquiet Thoughts *to Rest*. Our Mind would be, like a froward Child, ever crying and fretful whilst awake ; and therefore to be played and lulled asleep as fast as possible. And our main Happiness would be to steal ourselves gently and insensibly from a feeling of, or Reflection upon our Misery.

If Man had an ample Fund of Happiness within himself without any Deficiency ; whence is it that he is continually looking out abroad for foreign Amusements ? Amusements which rather suspend the Sense of Uneasiness, than give any substantial Satisfaction ; which keep the Soul in an even Poise between Pleasure and Pain, and are of no other Use but to make us insensible of the Tedioufness of living, to fill up the vacant Spaces of Time, and to shut out that importunate Intruder Self-reflection. Whence is it that That restless Thing, the Soul, too enterprizing to trace every Thing, *yea, the deep Things of*

SERM. GOD, is yet too cowardly to inquire into itself, and
 VIII. to view the inward Workings of that ever-loved,
 yet ever-avoided, Object, Itself? Whence it is that
 the Mind, whose active Energy prompts it to give a
 free and unconfined Range to her Thoughts on other
 Subjects; nay, to make, were that possible, the
 Tour of the whole Universe, yet when she comes to
 dwell at Home, and to survey the *little World* within,
 flags in her Vivacity, feels herself in a forlorn Condi-
 tion, and finds a Drowfiness and melancholy Gloom
 hanging upon her? Whence is it, but because the
 Soul, whenever it turns its Thoughts inward, finds
 within itself a frightful Void of solid Happiness
 without any Possibility of filling it up?

Indeed in a Circle of gay Follies, or in a Multipli-
 city of Business, when different Objects are in Suc-
 cession continually striking upon the Mind, the Ca-
 pacity of the Soul is taken up, and it forgets that
 inward Poverty and Indigence, which nothing can
 effectually relieve but the unsearchable Riches of the
 Love of GOD: But when we step aside from the
 Noise and beaten Tracks of Life into Solitude and
 Retirement, having no Employment to fix, no Recre-
 ation to dissipate, our Thoughts; we soon find that
 we are an insupportable Burden to ourselves without
 our GOD. Hence none is more miserable than a
 Man distracted with Variety of Business, excepting
 Him, who has no Business, no Amusement, at all.
 Recreations and *Pastimes*, properly so called (for
 they serve for no other End but to pass away our
 Time) may sooth the Mind into a pleasing Forget-
 fulness of its Misery. But Nothing can give us an
 exquisite Relish and Enjoyment of this Life but the
 Hopes

Hopes of a better through the Merits of **YESUS CHRIST.** SERM. VIII.

Should any Person ask then, "*Who will shew us any Good? Who will point out the Way to Felicity to us?*" We must answer in the *Psalmist's* Words, *LORD, lift THOU up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.*

What is Happiness but the Employment of the Faculties of our Souls upon suitable Objects? How great then must our *Hope*, how *delightful* our Prospect, or rather Anticipation of Happiness be, when our Understandings are employed, (and we are assured they ever shall be employed) in contemplating Him who is infinite Truth; and our Affections in loving Him who is infinite Goodness! What a rational Scheme of Bliss have the Scriptures therefore marked out to us, when they tell us, that, as to our *Wills and Affections, Whom have we in Heaven but GOD? and there is none upon Earth that we should desire in Comparison with GOD.* In Comparison, the *Psalmist* says, to intimate that we may love other Things *subordinate*ly to Him. *Our Flesh and our Heart may fail; but GOD is the Strength of our Heart, and our Portion for ever.* And, in other Places, that *we shall be filled with all the Fulness of GOD; and that we shall drink of His Pleasures as out of a River.* And then, as to our Understandings, that *we shall know as we ourselves are known; that in GOD's Light we shall see Light; and that we shall see Him as He is.* And how greatly (too greatly for our present far unequal Conceptions) will the Understanding be enlightened, when GOD shall shine forth *immediately* upon it, in the Fulness of His Glory,

SERMON. VIII. Glory, when we shall be as conscious of His enlivening Presence as we are of our own Existence; as sensible of His unerring Approbation, as we are of the Testimony of our own Consciences!

O blessed State, when I shall *behold Face to Face*, or have a *direct* View of, what is infinitely lovely! love what I behold! and be made happy in the Enjoyment of what I love! the First and Best of Beings; great and marvellous in His Works; just and righteous in His Ways; but infinite and incomprehensible in His Nature!

GOD hath styled himself *Light*: And as the whole material Creation would be involved in one black, horrid, and uncomfortable Gloom, if *Light* did not enliven it with its Smiles, and beautify it with a rich Variety of Colours; so would the spiritual Creation live in an *Eternal Blackness of Darkeness*, did not GOD lift up the *Light of His Countenance* upon it; brightening it with the Beams of His Truth, and chearing it with the Influences of His Favour.

In short, and to conclude; Earthly Objects may indeed swell and puff up the Soul with unsubstantial Bliss; but Nothing can fill up every Void in the Mind, and satisfy the whole Compass of our Desires with the Fulness of solid and unmingled Happiness, but that supreme Good, who pervades every Part of Matter, fills infinite Space, and *inhabits Eternity*; That Being, *who is above All, and through All, and in us All!*

First and best of Beings! before whom *ten Thousand Angels stand, and ten Thousand Times ten Thousand minister unto Thee!* Look down from that Variety

riety of exalted Creatures; Angels, Arch-Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim: approaching gradually nearer the Top of the Scale, but still at an infinite Distance from thy Perfections! Look down from *Them* upon *Us*, whom Thou hast made the lowest of accountable Beings — upon *Us*, who have made ourselves yet lower by our manifold Sins and Transgressions. Imprint this Truth deep in Proportion to its Value — Man's sickly distempered Soul, though it should for ever turn and shift from Side to Side in Search of Quiet, can rest in nothing but Thee, its Pillar and Support here, in full Trust of the Fulness of Joy hereafter,

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

The Duty of honouring the KING
founded on the Fear of GOD.

I P E T. II. 17.

Fear GOD. Honour the KING.

SERM.
IX.

IN the following Discourse I shall shew,

Ist, How far these two Precepts delivered in the Text are connected.

IIdly, I shall endeavour to enforce Obedience to the King. And then,

IIIIdly, Make some Reflections fuitable to the present Solemnity.

These two Precepts, however distinct and independent they may seem, have yet a close and inseparable Alliance. And indeed every Duty, whether of a Subject to his King, or of any one Man to another, must ultimately be resolved into the Will of GOD, into a Principle of Obedience to Him. This is the Basis of Morality according to Scripture. The Love of GOD is there called *the first and great Commandment*,

ment, from which all the rest are deduced. We are SERM.
commanded to be Holy, because GOD is Holy. IX.

Whatsoever we do, we are to do it heartily, as unto the LORD; not unto Man. I grant the Things are not merely and solely good because GOD has commanded them, but that he has commanded them because they are good; and therefore there is a Fitness in Things antecedent to GOD's Command. What inclines GOD to command such Things is their natural Fitness, i. e. their Tendency to promote either the common Good, or our own: But what makes our Observance of them morally good is our chusing to act in Obedience to His Command. Set aside the Will of GOD, who will reward and punish us as we have done well or ill, and moral Virtue will only be something occasional; to be observed or neglected as it falls in with, or crosses our favourite Interests, but it will never be a fixed, invariable Rule of Action upon all Occasions and Emergencies, that is, it will not be Virtue. For Virtue must be something fixed, and indispensable, and universally obligatory.

If the Will and Sanctions of GOD, and a future State, were left out of the Question, to pursue what tends to the common Good (if done only with a View to serve our present Interest) would be nothing but Convenience and Policy; but if done without any View to our present Interest, nay, when it was against our present Interest, would be Madness and Folly. For certainly it would be Madness and Folly to promote the Happiness of others at the Expence of our own, when we had no Equivalent in Reversion. 'Tis enthusiastical to pretend to love others

SERM. others *better* than ourselves, and to prefer their Hap-

IX. piness to our own. The only Rule of right Reason,

in him who expects no other Life, is, to make the best of this. And so, upon Occasion, all the Rules of what we now call Virtue would be reversed; it would be reasonable to break through any or all of them, to make Life happy when we could; and it would be reasonable to throw up Life when we could not. Falshood, Fraud, Rapine, Self-murder, or any other Murder, would be all reasonable as often as solid Convenience required it. For as certain as it is that each Man loves himself better than others, so certainly reasonable it would be that he never should sacrifice his own Ease and Happiness to continue that of his Fellow-creature, when he was not likely to be a Gainer by it in the Whole of his Existence.

A Man of unprejudiced Sense must soon be convinced that to make the whole Chain of Duties, branched out into infinite Variety of Links, hold firm and indissoluble, the first Link of the Chain must be fastened to the Throne of GOD, the consummate Standard of Perfection in Himself, and the unerring Judge of Perfection in others. Take away the Notion of a future State, and the fine Notions of abstract Finesses, intellectual Order and moral Beauty will have but small Influence upon a Man in deep Distress. *An exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* will turn the Scales, and preponderate in Favour of Virtue against the greatest Affliction; which in that View will appear light and momentary: But weigh cold, unaffecting Thought of I know not what

what abstract Finesses, of the Beauty and Loveliness of Virtue against the strong Pressure of urgent Misery (when we may get out of it by Knavery and Falshood) and it will be found wanting in the Balance, *lighter than Vanity*, and Nothing.

Either therefore We must say, that Virtue is not universally obligatory, which is contrary to the Ideas of Virtue; or We must say, that We are obliged to practise Virtue in all Cases of Extremity and Distress, though We shall never be the better for it; though We shall be finally Losers by it; which is contrary to common Sense:—or We must found Virtue on the Will of the Deity, who alone can make it our Interest to practise Virtue in all Cases. He alone can induce a solid, uniform, unvarying Obligation, who has the Sum total of our Existence at his Disposal, who can make our Happiness or Misery commensurate to our Existence.

Thus I have proved what Connexion there is between fearing GOD and honouring the King; and that this Duty, as well as other social Duties, must ultimately terminate in this grand Principle of fearing and obeying that Being, whose Vicegerents Kings are; by whom *Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*. This at least must be granted, that this is the only Principle which can affect our Conscience, and make us pay a conscientious Obedience to His Majesty. For Conscience supposeth us accountable Beings — But accountable to what? Not to I know not what abstract Finesses, Chimeras, abstract Ideas in our own Head. Conscience must suppose us accountable to some Superior, which Superior must be none but GOD. For human Laws and Lawgivers cannot

SERM. cannot reach that internal and invisible Principle the
 IX. Conscience. They may restrain the outward Action:
 but they cannot make us practise Virtue from the
 Heart. Nothing consequently but the Will of GOD
 can make us *subject for Conscience sake.*

But there is a farther Connexion between the two
 Precepts, which is this, that 2^{dly}, loose Notions of
 GOD and Religion are destructive to good Govern-
 ment.

What can We expect will be the Consequence
 when once the Religion of our fine Gentlemen shall
 become the Religion of People in low Life?
 What but *Confusion and every evil Work*? Will the
 poor People, when once they have imbibed the
 fashionable Religion, or rather no Religion, submit
 to the Hardships of Poverty? Will they not rather
 strive to relieve themselves by Force, Fraud and
 Robbery if they can? If they cannot, why then
 launch out into a World unknown, before they have
 received a Summons thither? This is no idle Dream;
 We see the Effects of Irreligion too plainly; parti-
 cularly in a late tragical Instance of complicated
 Wickedness; which an inveterate Hatred to Poverty
 gave Occasion to. And from hence we may learn,
 to what unnatural Extremities, even to that of a Pa-
 tent murdering in cold Blood his own Child, People
 proceed, when they have formed such loose Notions
 of GOD's Goodness as to discard all Apprehensions
 of his Wrath and Displeasure. Which is too often
 the Case of those who, instead of acquiescing in that
 unerring Rule, the Word of GOD, form their No-
 tions of GOD from their own narrow self-conceited
 Understandings.

I know

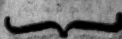
I know those who have left no Stone unturned to propagate loose Principles, would not be understood to be Enemies to Religion in general. No, though they depreciate Christianity they extol Natural Religion. Now not to observe, that these Men hang out false Colours in their Writings, for they speak a different Language where they can be free; yet what is this Natural Religion of which *We* read so much in their Writings, and see so little in their Practice? If they mean by it a Religion containing every Fitness whatever, every Fitness in general that is founded in the Reason and Nature of Things; this is indeed an excellent Religion. But then I doubt we must be omniscient to comprehend it, or to take in *every* Fitness that is founded in Reason. But if they mean by it, whatever is discoverable by our unenlightened Reason; such a Collection of Rules as every Man can make for himself by the Use of his own Faculties, under whatever, though the most disadvantageous, Circumstances; this Religion must be as imperfect, as variable, as People's Capacities, Means and Opportunities of Knowledge are different. In one Man's Scheme of Duty, Fornication will be allowed, because he has not Leisure, Capacity or Inclination to trace the Duty of Chastity, through a long Chain of Propositions, up to it's first Fountain-head. In another's, Self-murder, the Hatred of Enemies, and the like. In another's, public Worship, if not private too, will be left out; as indeed the Practice of our Infidels too plainly shews it is. Natural Religion then, as discoverable by our own Capacities, must be very vague, uncertain and undetermined; whereas Christianity proposes to us

SERM. one stated, settled, and regular Scheme of Action.

IX.

The former can but give us a very narrow and confined Prospect of another World; whereas by the latter we command a full and open View. It insures to us those great and everlasting Rewards; which, as they are infinitely disproportioned to our Worth, it would be the highest Presumption to expect without the revealed Mercies of GOD, and the Merits of our Saviour. All that Reason can prove here is only this; that whoever has acted up to the best Light he could have, shall here or hereafter find his Happiness preponderate his Misery. For when GOD's Goodness has bestowed upon every Creature, that is not wanting to himself, a Preponderancy of Bliss, His infinite Wisdom may dispose of the Surplus, that remains beyond this, as He pleases. It can never prove to us that incorruptible Happiness which our Saviour has by his Gospel displayed, and by his Merits insured to us; a Happiness unmixed in its Kind, exceeding in Degree, and eternal in Duration; that uninterrupted Enjoyment of Virtue, Truth and Pleasure, without any Alloy of Vice, Falshood or Pain.

I cannot but conclude then, that the Design of these Men is to strike at Religion in general. For any wise Man, that chuses to be of any Religion at all, would chuse to be of the Christian; the best Religion, the most worthy of GOD, the best calculated for the Good of Society, as well as of Individuals. And what confirms me in this Opinion is, that they must know that pure, uncorrupt, Natural Religion never did, never will, subsist in any Country independently of Revealed. It is a wild and visionary

tionary Scheme ; and whoever will prove, that any Nation ever did form a complete System of Religion, comprehending all our Duties, whether to GOD, our Fellow-creatures or ourselves, without any Assistan-
 SERM. IX. 

We are, I hope, in no immediate Danger of Popery : But where these Principles, so openly avowed, so widely propagated, will end, GOD only knows. The *Pretender's* Cause is now, I think, desperate, and may it always continue so—But there is one Observation which I cannot help making, namely, that if we should ever have the Misfortune, which GOD forbid, to see him settled on the Throne, Irreligion must be the Door by which he enters. For Irreligion will pave the Way, however like a Paradox it may sound, to Superstition, and Superstition, Popish Superstition, to a Popish Government. The Person who, not many Years since, laboured the most in the Cause of Infidelity, was confessedly a Papist before the Revolution ; and I never heard, that he professed any other Religion after. And in his last elaborate System of Infidelity he sometimes drops the Mask, and cannot help giving broad Hints of his good Will to that Religion. The Popish Emissaries, who swarm among us, are known to personate *Deists*, to unite their Endeavours heartily with theirs, and have some of them been heard to declare, they wish no greater Advantage to their Cause, than to see our People set loose from all Religion. They triumph and say, *There, there, so would We have it.* They find their Account in it, and in-

SERM. deed have already had by this Means a plentiful Har-
 IX. vest of Profelytes: And it is Matter of Fact, that
 vulgar and untutored Minds, the more they are des-
 poiled of Religion, the sooner they fall an easy
 and defenceless Prey to the worst of Religions, Po-
 pery.

We know the Transition is very easy from Su-
 perstition to Infidelity; and I should be glad to
 know, why it should not be as easy from Infidelity
 to Superstition; since we are very apt to run from
 one Extream to another. The present declared
 Scheme of *Deism* is this; that People must be left
 to collect every one a Religion for himself indepen-
 dently, according as their Ignorance, Short-sighted-
 ness, or Passions, which to be sure they will call their
 Reason, shall mislead. Now as the best King that
 ever sat on the Throne could not wish a Nation more
 Happiness than that the Precepts of the Gospel should
 be universally obeyed, and the Doctrines of it, those
 strong Incentives to Virtue, universally believed
 through his Kingdom; so the most ill-natured Being,
 the most accursed Spirit, could not wish a Nation
 greater Confusion than their Scheme, so big with
 Evils, would occasion if it should take Place, The
 Consequence of which would be, that as soon as the
 People opened their Eyes, and saw the numerous
 Train of Miseries that it had plunged them into,
 how an unrestrained Freedom of Thought had every
 where produced a correspondent Freedom in Action,
 they would conceive an utter Abhorrence of what
 had been the Source of so many Evils; and resolved
 to fly precipitately through an inveterate, undistin-
 guishing Hatred, as far as ever they could get from
 Infidelity

Infidelity (the farther, they would think, the better) they would run into the very Jaws of Popery. They might indeed rove about for a while pleased in the Mazes of Error; but weary of so many crude Notions, weary of wandering, ever *seeking Rest, and finding none*, they might be tempted at last to take up with a pretended infallible Guide. Thus this Nation would tread in a Round of Error. The Cant and Enthusiasm in the Time of the Grand Rebellion, begat in the next Generation an abandoned Profaneness and Immorality, which were productive of Infidelity, which hath been growing ever since; and Infidelity may at last, if it goes on, produce Enthusiasm, or something worse. We dance in a Circle, and may end just in the same Point where we set out.

Be this as it will; it is but too melancholy a Prospect that the Youth of the Nation are almost universally poisoned in their Principles, and those who should be the Flower of the Nation, are, alas! but too generally become the very Dregs of it. Formerly indeed, as well as now, the Sallies of youthful Blood would hurry them into several Extravagances and Irregularities; yet still their Principles continue sound and uncorrupt, which would exert themselves as soon as the youthful Ferment abated. But now they take Care to corrupt their Principles first; which ever after shuts up all Avenues to a Reformation. Hence that flagrant Contempt of all Authority divine and human. Hence that avowed Disregard to all Subordination of Servants to their Masters, Children to their Parents, Subjects to their King. And why should Those wonder at this, who have taken

SERM. no-Care to cultivate a due Use of the greatest Regard, the Foundation of all the rest, that of a Creature to his Creator.

IX.

To conclude this Head; one cannot more effectually shew a Zeal for his Majesty, who has declared he will make the Interest of Religion his first and chief Concern, than by shewing a Detestation of those Principles, which would unhinge his Government. Add to this, that a National Impiety, when once the People had filled up the *Measure of their Iniquity*, never failed, as all Histories inform us, to draw down a National Vengeance. But this is too melancholy a Subject to be dwelt upon: I hasten therefore,

Illy, To enforce Obedience to the King.

Now as GOD has made us sociable Creatures, He must *will* Society—consequently He must *will* whatever is necessary to Society.—There can be no Society without some Government: The very Idea of Society includes Superiors and Inferiors—There can be no Government without Honour, Homage, and Obedience to Governours. Thus Government in general is the Will and Institution of GOD: though the particular Forms and Models of Government, except the *Israelitish*, are plainly of human Institution. The Scripture orders us *to be subject to the Powers that be*. It hath enjoined Obedience in general, without clogging it with particular Exceptions; which was wisely done, and worthy of it's divine Author. Cases of Necessity are always implied, and therefore need not be specified. The Misfortune is, People are apt rather to imagine Cases
of

of Necessity of a Resistance, where there are none, than not to feel them when they really are such. They are apt to fancy solid and substantial Grievances without a just Cause, and to carry their Resentment too far when there is a just Cause. 'Tis hard to hit, in some Cases at least, the dividing Point between Rebellion and Resistance, and to say, *Hither to shalt thou go in thy passive Obedience, and no farther.* As therefore thin Partitions, in some Cases, divide the Bounds between Rebellion and Resistance, it was best to inculcate the Doctrine of Obedience at large without express Restrictions.

The Scripture need not be explicit on this Head. When Cases of Necessity happen, the Voice of Nature, in every free Nation where their Minds are not gradually prepared for Slavery, the Voice of Nature speaks within us in the most importunate and feeling Manner, demands an Audience, and with the most powerful and awakening Call, intimates to us, that it could never be the Design of that Being, who wills the Happiness of all His Creatures, that the Bulk of a Nation should be made miserable by the arbitrary and lawless Pleasure of a Tyrant. Such a Case of Necessity there was before the Revolution, when the Vitals of our Constitution both in Church and State were wounded; when Power was assumed to lay asleep, and dispense with our Laws, (the Security of our Property) and Popery and Slavery had like to have been intailed upon us. And we see by the universal Bent of the People, who acceded to the glorious Scheme, that human Nature is not overdull of Apprehension, when aggrieved in so extraordinary a Manner. The Nobility and Populace,

SER. M. the Gentry and Clergy, with united Hearts combined
IX. in the Scheme of our Deliverance. And as long as

We have any Regard for our Constitution, as long as We set any Value upon the two most valuable Things, the pure, uncorrupt Christian Religion as professed by the Church of *England*, and our Liberties, which were both in imminent Danger of being lost; We ought to express a Regard for our Deliverer at that Juncture, who took Care, as far as in him lay, to perpetuate the Blessing, and to transmit it to our posterity, by settling the Crown upon the present illustrious Royal Family (as our surest Barrier against the Evils We were before exposed to) where may it long continue as long as any Branch of the Family remains! The Boundaries between the Prerogative of the King, and the Liberties of the People, were then better adjusted, and have continued down to us, than they had been before. And notwithstanding all the late Outcries, all the virulent Libels against his Majesty's Government, it is certain We enjoy more Liberty than any well regulated Government besides can pretend to, of which those very Libels are a Proof. We cannot be said to honour the King, if we do not discountenance all those groundless Clamours, which tend to alienate the Affection of His People, to clog the Wheels of His Government, and to embarrass the Administration. Let us then, as far as the Sphere of our Power extends, promote a dutiful Submission, and instil loyal Principles. May all Schemes, that tend to bring in Popery, and its constant Attendant, Slavery, or to poison the Minds of Men with Republican Principles, be blasted. May the King long live

live happy in His numerous Progeny, happy in the Affections and Hearts of His People. And may we live long happy in His paternal Regard and Rule over us. Let us *fear the LORD, and the King*, and not meddle with those turbulent Spirits who are *given to Change*.

To speak Evil of the Ruler of the People, and of *Dignities*, is a Vice expressly forbidden in Scripture. On the other Hand, to extol them while they are upon the Throne, creates a Suspicion of some sinister Views and By-ends. And indeed Praises are seldom valuable, but when they come from those who can dispraise with Impunity. In the present Case they are intirely needless, it being a Consideration of sufficient Weight to inforce Obedience, that whoever would attempt to new-model the Government, or to displace the present Royal Family, must embark, it is to be hoped, in an impracticable Scheme. But if he should succeed in his Attempts, he must throw this Kingdom into Convulsions, and leave us in a much worse State than he found us. He must unhinge the best constituted Government, to give us I know not what in its Room.

Which brings me,

III^{dly}, To conclude with some Reflexions suitable to the Solemnity.

GOD, who, at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, hath formerly delivered this Nation from Popery, hath, in a remarkable Manner, rescued Us from the imminent Apprehensions of it arising from the late Rebellion: A Religion which Men of good Nature must abhor for its many Cruelties; Men of Sense, for its many Absurdities; and Men of Virtue, for its

SERM.

IX.

its large Indulgences to, and Encouragement of Immorality. It was to have been ushered in, and indeed could only be ushered in, by Bloodshed, Rapine and Desolation, and could only have been supported by arbitrary Power, and illegal Acts of Cruelty and Oppression. There could not have been a more terrible Thing than to have had a Popish Prince at the Head of a Protestant Nation: Nor could any Thing have been more unreasonable. For is it reasonable that a Papist, because He is of royal Descent, should be invested with a Regal Power in a Country, where, if he had been born a private Man, he could not in Law, and ought not in Reason, to have been intrusted with the lowest Office in the Government? No Nation under the Sun ever permits a Person, who is of a different Religion from it, to sit at the Helm of it; and the Reason is, because it is very absurd to put it in any Man's Power to subvert one Part, and a very valuable Part, of our Constitution, who has a strong and rivetted Inclination to do it.

Promises, that they will secure us in the Possession of our Religion, signify nothing; because such Promises are never to be depended upon. People in Adversity promise generally very fair, who, when they have got the Reins in their Hands, break through all Vows, Ties and Engagements. The same Professions *Queen Mary* made; and how she kept them, let the History of her Reign inform us, which was one continued Scene of Cruelty and Martyrdom; Cruelty, intirely owing to her Religion. For, setting aside that, she was in her own Nature very compassionate. Nay, so far did the Fury of that Reign extend, that the helpless Infant, forced from the Mother's Womb

Womb by the Extremity of Tortures, was thrown alive into the Flames as guilty of its Mother's Heresy, and under the Sentence of the Holy Court, which had condemned the Mother without excepting her Womb*. Such Promises King *James the Second* made with Tears in His Eyes before He came to the Throne; and no sooner was he settled in it, but he left no Stone unturned to destroy the Reformed Religion. And yet He was a Prince of many excellent

* See Bishop *Burnet's History of the Reformation*, Vol. II.

P. 314.

Anno 1556.—“ But this *July* there was done in *Guernsey* an Act of as great Inhumanity, as ever was recorded in any Age. A Mother and her two Daughters were burnt at the same Stake; and one of them a married Woman big with Child; when she was in the Fire, the Violence of it bursting her Belly, a Boy fell out into the Flame, that was snatched out of it by one that was more merciful than the rest: but after they had a little consulted about it, the Infant was thrown in again, and *there* was literally baptized with Fire. There were many Eye-witnesses of this, who attested it afterwards in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time, when the Matter was enquired into, and special Care was taken to have full and evident Proofs of it. For indeed the Fact was so unnatural, that a Man must either be possessed with a very ill Opinion of the Actors, or be well satisfied about the Number and Credibility of the Witnesses, before he could believe it. But Lies and Forgeries are seldom made of Actions done in the Face of the Sun, and before so great an Assembly as was present at this. Therefore Complaint being made of it to Queen *Elizabeth*, the Dean of *Guernsey* was put in Prison for it; and afterwards he, and nine more, that were all accessory to it, took out their Pardons. So merciful was the Government then, to pardon an Action of such a monstrous Nature, because done with some Colour of Law; since it was said, the Mother was condemned to be burnt, and no Exception was made of her Belly.” And p. 315. “ And above all; the Barbarity of *Guernsey* raised that Horror in the whole Nation, that there seems ever since that Time such an Abhorrence to that Religion to be derived down from Father to Son, that it is no Wonder an Aversion so deeply rooted, and raised upon such Grounds, does, upon every new Provocation, or Jealousy of returning to it, break out in most violent and convulsive Symptoms.”

Qualities,

SERM. Qualities, and would have made a Nation of *Roman*

IX. Catholics very happy. The Truth of it is, We have only the Vices of a *Protestant* Prince to fear, and may be made happy by his Virtues: But the very Piety of a *Papish* Prince obliges him to our Destruction, and in Proportion as he is more religious, he becomes more insupportable.

But how little their Professions, or even Oaths, are to be depended on, the following Instance, related by Historians of their own Persuasion sufficiently shews; and I the rather mention it, as it contains a remarkable Instance of a particular Providence. *Uladislaus* King of *Hungary* made a Peace with *Amurath* the *II*d Emperor of the *Turks*, for ten Years. The King swore upon the *Gospel*, the *Turk* upon the *Alcoran*, to observe the Treaty then made. The *Pope* dissolved the Oath, and dispensed with the King of *Hungary*'s Obligations to it. Upon this he invades the Enemy, unsuspecting any such Thing, and consequently unprepared: A Battle ensues, and *Amurath* was in Danger of being overpowered and defeated. In this Distress, in the Heat of the Action, *Amurath* the Emperor of the *Turks* pulls out of his Bosom the Treaty of Peace which the *Papists* had made, and sworn to observe; and looking up to the Crucifix, which was carried before them; "This, says he, O *Christ*, is the League which *Thy Christians* made with me, swearing to observe it by *Thy Name*. If *Thou* be a *GOD*, avenge the Injury which they have done both to *Thee* and me *."

He had hardly uttered these Words, when the Battle began to turn against them. The King, who

* See *Knolles's Turkish History*, p. 203.

had broke his Oath, was slain in the Action; a total SERM.
 Defeat followed, and scarce a third Part of the Army IX.
 escaped. A signal Proof that there is a particular Providence, as well as that the *Romanists* do not think themselves obliged to keep Faith with *Heretics*, as they call us; but will, in full Possession of Power, recant those Vows as null and void, which they made in Distress.

Nay, those very Men, if any such there were, who, though sincere *Protestants*, favoured the Interests of a *Popish* Pretender, under the groundless Hopes of having what they called Grievances redressed, would have been just in the Case of the Man in the Fable, who, labouring under a Load, though not very heavy, called for Death to relieve him from it: but when he came, would have been glad to have compounded for his Burden, by getting quit of a much greater Evil. Ever since the Reformation has been established, *from it's Youth up* the *Papists* have fought against it. But, Thanks be to GOD! *they have not prevailed against it!* Their Attempts have been often, very often providentially defeated, and all their Measures blasted. We are rescued from a Rebellion that would have impoverished the Publick, raised several Tumults, made our Country a Seat of War and Desolation, and exposed it to the Attempts of foreign Enemies.

Arbitrary Power would have been absolutely necessary to introduce a corrupt and absurd Religion, and would have been so natural to the Insolence of a Conqueror, that should our Invader have gained the Sovereign Power by Violence, there is no Doubt but he would have preserved it by Tyranny.

Success

SERM.

IX.

Success is not always a Proof, that we are the extraordinary Favourites of Heaven. However, if it should not be thought strictly providential, there is something at least extraordinary and unaccountable, that an illustrious Person, whose Years did not promise any distinguished Experience or Conduct in Military Affairs, or incline our Men to repose a firm Confidence in Him, should strike a Terror into a Set of desperate Men, embarked in a desperate, as well as wicked Cause, who were flushed with repeated Successes: That our Armies should be like so many Cyphers (which however numerous, were of little or no Account) till He, the distinguished Figure, was placed at the Head of them. But from that Time that He was placed the principal Figure at the Head of them, their Numbers became of infinite Value, and could earn or purchase any Thing, however valuable the Acquisition might be. This seems to be the LORD's Doing, and it ought to be *marvellous in our Eyes*; that We were not given over for a Prey unto them; that we still retain those Blessings that ought to be most dear to us as *Englishmen and Protestants*.

And it is to be hoped, that, by a due Reflexion on the Progress and Event of this Conspiracy, Those who are not convinced of the Wickedness of Attempts of this Kind, must at least see the Vanity, Folly and Madness of them.

To conclude: We have with a commendable Zeal on many Occasions stood in Defence of our Religion at the Expence of the Blood and Treasure of the Nation; let it not be observed that the Religion of *England*, like a mere Watch-word for an Army, is never

ver valued but when it is to be fought for ; and in Times of Peace laid by and condemned to rust, with other useless Instruments of War.

SERM.
IX.

To a Zeal for Religion let us add *Charity*, the Crown of all Virtues, and let us lay aside all Hatred, Malice and Desire of Revenge ; that We may *with one Heart and one Mouth glorify GOD* for His Mercies, and implore His Protection for ourselves, our King and our Country ; that He would give us the Blessings of Peace, and that We may never want a *Protestant* Prince, who has the Interests of Reformed Christianity and the Good of his Country at Heart, to rule over us.

S E R M O N

SERMON X.

Religious Pleasures productive of the
greatest Happiness.

PROV. III. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.

SERM.
X.

THE turbulent Passions, such as Anger and Revenge, are disagreeable to our Nature, because they are open and declared Enemies to our Repose: they alarm the Soul at their first Insurrection, and afterwards command it with an overbearing Tyranny. But Pleasure steals upon Us by insensible Degrees, smooths it's Passage to the Heart by a gentle and insinuating Address, and softens and disarms the Soul of all it's Strength. It is more therefore to be guarded against, as being more dangerous, and what we have a greater Inclination to. To arm Us then against the Deceitfulness of unlawful sensual Delights, I have chosen the Words of *Solomon*, which set before Us the genuine and sincere Pleasure which Religion affords. *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.* In discoursing on which Words I shall endeavour to shew,

I. *First,*

I. *First*, That the Pleasures of Religion and Virtue are superior to the Pleasures of the Animal Life; and, SERM.
X.

II. *Secondly*, How necessarily those must be disappointed, who place their Happiness in any Thing exclusive of Religion and Virtue.

First then I am to shew, that the Pleasures of Religion and Virtue are superior to the Pleasures of the Animal Life.

And here we expect to be told by the Men of Pleasure, that spiritual Satisfactions are nothing but the Product of an over-heated Fancy, and mere Enthusiasm. But we except against *them* as very incompetent Judges. A good Man by tasting the Pleasures of Sense, as far as they are consistent with Reason, is very well qualified to form a true Estimate of them. But the sensual Man, by being an utter Stranger to Religion, is no more able to make a Judgment of the Satisfaction it yields, than a Man of no Taste is to pass a decisive Verdict upon the Elegancies of Poetry, or an Idiot upon a Point of Philosophy.

Dismissing *him* therefore as an improper Judge, we appeal to the Virtuous for the Superiority of *rational* Delights; — whether *others* are not for the most Part either idle Diversions to lull our unquiet Thoughts to sleep, to sooth the Mind into a Forgetfulness of itself, and to make Life pass away unperceived; — or rather, whether they are not tumultuous Joys, that put us in a Ferment, and give the Soul too sudden and violent Emotions. Whereas virtuous Pleasures produce a serene and lasting Com-

SERM. posure of Mind; they satisfy, but never satiate.

X. They flow not, like a Torrent, with a short-lived Noise and Impetuosity; but like a peaceful River in it's own Channel, strong without Violence, and gentle without Dulness.

But what am I going to prove — that he who strives to resemble God in Holiness and Purity, must have superior Gratifications to him, who makes himself like the Beasts that perish? A Man that is sunk into Brutality may indeed deny, that those Delights must be the highest, which are seated in the highest and noblest Part of Us, the Soul: but all the World besides will own, that the Joys which spring from a distempered Appetite, and are accompanied with a Feverishness of Desire, are infinitely inferior to those of a well-regulated Mind, and a *Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man.*

We see in several Instances, that Men prefer their Reputation before the Gratification of a brutal Appetite, when put in Competition with each other; and though free from Conscience, they are yet Slaves to Fame. Now the Pleasure of a good Name is seated in the Mind; it comes not from Sensation but Reflection. They own then, that an intellectual Good is preferable to the gross Indulgencies of the Animal Life. But if Reputation, which is but the Shadow of Virtue claims the Ascendant and Superiority over sensual Enjoyments; certainly Virtue, which is the Substance itself, ought to take Place of them in the true and impartial Estimate of Things.

I would gladly persuade the *Voluptuary* to try an Experiment, and then tell me, when he has cherished the Worthy, and relieved the Distressed by some well-placed Act of Charity; whether the Consciousness of

of having made an human Heart *to sing for Joy*, and *the Blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon him*, did not impart a more liberal, manly, and unallayed Complacency, than all the cheating Blandishments and Allurements of Sense. The latter are the Pleasures of the *Brute*; whereas the former are the Pleasures of the *Man*, shall I say? rather of good Angels, nay even of God, who, wanting nothing himself, supplies the Wants of every other Being. And what can more transport, what can more ennoble the Soul, than to be so temperate, as to have as few Wants as possible in ourselves; and yet so charitable as to do as much Good as possible to others? A remarkable Instance of this disinterested Virtue, and the superior Satisfaction that attends great and worthy Actions, we have in the generous *Scipio*, who, in the Bloom of Youth, returned his fair Captive, a Master-piece of Beauty, to her future Husband and Parents, whom Conquest gave him an absolute Right to, in the Opinion of the Heathen World. When he refused a considerable Sum of Gold, which was offered by the Parents; and when at last consenting to accept of it, at their repeated Instances, he delivered it as a Part of her Dowry to her Spouse; I desire to know, whether the Commendations, which his own Heart gave him, seconded with the Praises of an Husband and Parents delivered from their jealous Apprehensions, did not inspire him with a greater Exultation of Delight, than the Possession of an injured Woman could have afforded. Their Praises were the sincere Tribute of grateful Hearts, and flowed from the Fulness of their Souls; and Nothing could be more acceptable to *Scipio's* ingenuous Mind, except the Consciousness of the Beauty of his

SERM.
X.

SERM. own Action; whereas the Thoughts of wounding
 X. the Honour of a noble Family, and the Peace of
 Aged Parents, must have dashed his Enjoyments,
 and rendered them distasteful. This delicate Sentiment of *Scipio* was attended with much truer and more solid Satisfaction, than any sensual Gratification could have been; it was the Pleasure of Reason, which will bear repeating in the Mind, and improves upon Reflection.

On the contrary, where the gross Affections take Place, they leave little Room for Virtue; they tarnish the Lustre of the best Actions, and make a Man uneasy and dissatisfied with himself. For he that is good by Halves, labours under a perpetual Discord of Life; he is agitated alternately by Sentiments of unlawful Pleasure and Piety, and passeth his Life in a perpetual Round of following and condemning the same Things. On the one Hand, the Remainders of Virtue and Conscience embitter the Sweets of Vice; and, on the other Hand, the Practice of Vice palls the Relish of Virtue and spiritual Delights. He is neither Brute enough to indulge his Appetites without Remorse, nor Man enough to govern them. Hence he is at perpetual Variance with himself, having just Religion enough to make him uneasy, but not enough to make him happy.

A Man that is divided between Piety and Sin, is like One that lives on the Confines of two mighty contending States; his Breast is a constant Seat of War; and he is sometimes under the Dominion of Virtue, and sometimes under the Tyranny of Vice: whereas a Person of advanced Piety, like One that lives in the inmost Part of the Country, enjoys a secure and unmolested Situation of Soul.

Thus does Uneasiness haunt the Man, that, like SERM.
a Person struck with the *dead Palsy*, is Part dead and X.
Part alive; and thus it will disquiet him, 'till his
Conscience becomes *seared as it were with an hot*
Iron, and he thinks there is no Difference between
Good and Evil; and to be persuaded of this, is as
difficult as to believe there is no God.

But to take a right Estimate of a Man of Plea-
sure, we should view him in the last Stage of Life.
Good God! how contemptible does he appear to the
World, and I dare say, even to himself, when he
has no more that Sprightliness and outward Form,
which raised the Admiration of the Unthinking;
nor that Virtue and Knowledge, which are necessary
to gain the Esteem of the Wise. When young
(however inconsiderate and inconsiderable in himself)
he might be fancied for a pert Stupidity and a
sprightly Impertinence; some bright Sentence in Fa-
vour of Infidelity, or Piece of Ridicule in Contempt
of Religion, might meet with the Applause of his
ingenious Acquaintance, who would be apt enough
to stare upon him with a foolish Face of Praise. But
the Gaiety of Youth being gone off, he must wear
out the Remainder of his Days undistinguished and
neglected: not daring to be alone; abhorring his
own Company; listless and uneasy at the present, he
has no Pleasure in reflecting upon what is past, nor
in the Prospect of any Thing to come.

If he has an ample Fortune, Riches, it is true,
may command an insipid Complaisance; a formal
Homage and ceremonious Professions of Respect:
and teach a servile World to speak a Language fo-
reign to their Hearts. But where true Merit is want-

SERM. ing, Riches can never procure an affectionate Esteem,
 X. an undissembled Love, the Tribute which Virtue alone
 can either expect or deserve.

Hence it is that Men of this Stamp are continually complaining, that the Times are much altered for the worse; because the Sprightliness of their Youth represented every Thing in the most engaging Light, and when People are pleased with themselves, they are apt to be so with all around them; the Face of Nature brightens up, and the Sun shines with a more agreeable Lustre. But when Old Age has cut them off from the Enjoyments they so much delighted in, and habitual Vice has given them a Disrelish of the only true Pleasure, *whose Leaf withers not*, and whose Verdure remains in the Winter of our Days; no Wonder, that a Soul thus distempered, should view every Object on it's dark Side: the Change is not in the Times, but in Themselves, who have been forsaken by those Gratifications, which they could not be prevailed with to forsake. How much otherwise is it with the Virtuous, who have laid up an inexhaustible Fund of Pleasures against Old Age! the Current of whose Virtue, still increasing as it runs along, becomes more strong and vigorous the nearer it approaches to the Ocean of Eternity. — But this brings me to shew,

Secondly, How necessarily Those must be disappointed, who place their Happiness in any Thing exclusive of Religion and Virtue.

When we first make our Entrance into the World, we are too apt to form sanguine Notions, and gaudy Prospects of Bliss; a thousand luxuriant Scenes present

sent themselves to our View. But by that Time we reach the Noon of Life, Experience of the World, frequent Crosses and Disappointments call Home our straggling Thoughts; lower our Notions of Happiness, and reduce them to a just Sense of Things: to what is really attainable in this State; which is at best (for any Length of Time) not true Pleasure, but rather a Freedom from Pain.

SERM.
X.

And if a Man, at the Close of Life, were to make an impartial Estimate; I doubt he would think his Sufferings more than equivalent to his Enjoyments: he would be unwilling, were the Choice given him, to tread the same Round over, and to measure Life back again.

Few will deny this as to the Poor, whose daily Labour serves for little else, but to get their daily Bread, and their daily Bread just refreshes and strengthens them to undergo their daily Labour.

But the Rich, you will say, have much fairer Pretensions to Happiness. Here then we may expect to find it, if any where: And yet They differ from Others more in Shew than Reality; and perhaps their Passions, being more importunate and clamorous in their Demands, in Proportion to the Superiority of their Fortune, may make them only more pompously wretched than the Vulgar. Greatness, by making Pleasure familiar to them, flattens their Relish for it; but gives a keener Edge to every Pain, which They must feel as well as Others: it dulls their Enjoyments, but points and quickens the Sense of Anguish and Affronts. Indeed they may with Application pursue this or that new Pleasure, they may be fond for a while of a new Acquisition; but

SERM. when the Gloss of Novelty is once worn off, the

X. Transition is very natural from Fondness to Indifference, and That becomes tasteless and insipid to them, which they before so affectionately coveted. The Eagerness of Desire being over, we find that our Reason was but the Dupe of our Imagination, which had painted Things bigger than the Life. Hence there is a restless Agitation in our Minds, still craving something new, still dissatisfied with it when possessed. Hence we are continually shifting the Scene, expecting That Happiness from a Variety of Enjoyments, which We cannot find in any One of them. *All the Rivers run into the Sea, says the Wise Man, yet is the Sea not full:* just so though all earthly Pleasures should center in One Soul, yet would not that Soul be filled and satisfied; because, as the Soul is a spiritual Being, Nothing but spiritual Pleasures can, in Propriety of Speech, be suitable to it's Nature, and proportioned to it's Grandeur. Hence that great King, after he had travelled through, and curiously surveyed every Region of Pleasure, returned at last to Virtue, the Native Country of the Soul; in which only she could dwell with Satisfaction.

Here then the Mistake lies; People in their Enquiries after Happiness place it on improper Objects; they are looking for it abroad, and have Recourse to a thousand Diversions and Amusements, whilst it is only to be found at Home, in the right Use of Reason; in Passions well-regulated and directed; in a delightful Self-consciousness in having done all the Good in our Power; in having employed our Time to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of Mankind.

But

But if Happiness be the Exercise of our Faculties upon proper Objects, That surely must be the noblest Happiness when our Minds are exercised upon the noblest Objects. SERM. X.

How comes it then, that this great Truth is generally overlooked; that those especially, who make the Pursuit of Happiness the great Business of their Lives; that those, who should command a more spacious Prospect by standing upon higher Ground, and enjoying a more commodious Situation in the World, are yet as dead to all Sentiments of Piety as the meanest Peasant, or most illiterate Mechanic? Why, the Drudgery of Business cannot more effectually sink and debase the Mind of the latter, than a constant Circle of gay Follies does that of the former: for even innocent Amusements, when too often repeated, and too much indulged, do as effectually destroy true Piety, as sensual Pleasures themselves; because the Mind, by being fixed on Trifles, is disabled and indisposed for greater and more important Business. These Diversions, however innocent in themselves, may yet, by an Excess of them, become criminal, as they are attended with very bad Consequences; as they destroy all Manliness of Soul, and occasion that Levity of Temper, which exposes us to the Inroads of Temptation, and makes us susceptible of ill Impressions. When Steadiness, the Anchorage of the Soul, is once lost, she becomes the Sport of the Passions, and is carried away with every Wind.

From this Fountain, from that amazing Folly of our Great Ones in running after every public Entertainment, how trifling and ridiculous soever it may be,

SERM. be, has flow'd that fashionable Indifference and Dis-
 X. regard for every Thing that is Serious and Sacred.

The Day, which is more immediately set apart for the Service and Worship of God, is generally profaned; and an Habit of Gaming has extinguish'd every Sentiment of Devotion. Nor does the Misfortune end here: Inferiors are proud to form themselves upon the Model of their Superiors; and when those, who are bound by all the Ties of Gratitude to that God, *who giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, to advance the Interests of Religion, and to enlarge it's Empire, stamp a Credit upon Vice and Irreligion; by this Means a Gate is opened to all Manner of Profaneness: Men commonly thinking it some Excuse for their Crimes, if they can plead the Example of their Betters in Favour of them.

What then? will some One say; is this your Way to Happiness? Must we bid Adieu to all Diversions? — By no Means — I would not be understood to decry Amusements in general; I only condemn them, when they take up too much of our Time, and interfere with nobler Pursuits. For certainly We were not placed in this World, like the *Leviathan* in the Deep, only *to take our Pastime therein*. There are Duties to be performed by Us; and, as a Motive to our Obedience, the great Lawgiver has made these Duties and our Happiness consistent with each other: they go Hand in Hand, and the Pleasure which results from Virtue is a sufficient Recommendation of it to our Practice. Who ever relieved the Indigent without feeling within himself the greatest Complacency and Satisfaction? Compare the Pleasures of Sobriety and Temperance with those of Rioting

Rioting and Excess; the sweet Sleep of Labour and Industry with the broken and disturbed Slumbers of Idleness and Luxury, and Reason will soon convince you which deserves to have the Preference. SERM. X.

We may therefore lay it down as a Maxim of undoubted Truth, that none is a greater *Epicure* than the true, sincere *Christian*; None are greater *Self-deniers* than the abandoned in Pleasure; as they cut themselves off from the most valuable Enjoyments; as they contract a Littleness of Soul, and a Disrelish and Insensibility to every generous Sentiment of Humanity and Goodness; as they must be obliged to a thousand Trifles to fill up the mighty Void of Thought, to shut out that importunate Intruder Self-reflection, and to keep off that Sullenness, which must come upon a Mind conscious of no intrinsic Worth; and when some Years, each more flat and insipid than another, are thus spent, they have no Reason to value this Life, but merely because they are afraid of a future.

The Conclusion of all is, Happiness consists in our placing it upon true and proper Objects. We have seen, that *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, cannot secure it to Us. Let us therefore seek for it, where it is only to be found, in the Practice of Virtue and Religion. And *pure and undefiled Religion is this*, to relieve the Distressed, to have an universal Charity for all Men, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the World.

SERMON XI.

Of Anger, Meekness, &c.

EPHES. IV. 26.

Be ye angry, and sin not.

SERM.
XI.

HOWEVER unequal the Dispensations of Providence, upon a careless and transient View, may seem to be; yet, upon a more close and accurate Survey, we shall find a greater Equality therein than we were aware of. Thus, for Instance, the Men in whose Composition Fire and Spirit are the predominant Ingredients, have generally much nobler Designs, and are capable of greater Attainments, than those of a phlegmatic and more dispassionate Make. But then the same Life and Energy, which push on the *former* to undertake generous and heroic Actions, often precipitate them into fatal Excesses. If they are *more* than the common Run of Men in *some* Respects; Providence, to humble them and reduce them to a Level with their Fellow-Creatures, has left them in Danger of being *less* than Men in *others*. When they do well, No-body better; and when ill, No-body worse. Whereas the Men of cooler and more Saturnine Constitutions resemble
the

the colder Countries; which, though they are not productive of those generous Fruits and rich Metals that ennoble the hotter Climates, are yet free from several noxious and baneful Animals wherewith the others abound. The Affections in These are gentle Ferments working in the Breast, which hinder it from settling into Inactivity, but do not transport it into Exorbitances and intemperate Heats. They can more easily observe the Apostle's Precept, *Be ye angry, and sin not.*

Since the Scripture every-where not only condemns the grosser Acts of Vice, but forbids the least Approach or Tendency to it; the Apostle's Meaning cannot be this: "Indulge yourselves in Anger, provided you sin not." No; we must not go to the utmost Verge of what we call *lawful* Anger, lest we be unawares betrayed into what is *not* so. Thin Partitions divide the Frontiers between what is *merely innocent* and what is *unlawful*; and the Transition from the one to the other is almost insensible, and therefore almost unavoidable. He that escapeth Danger is a *fortunate* Man; but he that does not wantonly throw himself into it is a *wise* Man. After we have once given the Reins to our *Passion*, it becomes an unequal Task to stop it where we please; it is in vain to say, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.* The much wiser Expedient is to shorten the Line of our Liberty, and to watch the first Emotions of Anger. St. Paul's Meaning I therefore take to be this; "If you should happen to be angry, take Care that you do not *sin.*" There are some who put so *strict* an Interpretation on this Text, as supposes us to *sin* if we are *angry at all*;

SERM. *all*; and consequently that *Anger* is *in itself* sinful.

XI.

But this is straining the Words to a Sense which is neither easy nor natural; which is not countenanced from other plain Parts of Scripture; and which cannot be justified on the Principles of Morality. For *Anger* is one of the *Passions*; and of the same essential Kind with the others that are implanted in our natural Frame. Now, though God in the Beginning made Man *upright*, and free from any Incurision of irregular *Passions*; yet he must have foreseen the Defects and Frailties that our Nature would become subject to by the original Transgression; and foreseeing would not, we may safely say, suffer any Thing absolutely and *in itself* sinful or evil to remain in the essential Constitution of our Nature. On the contrary, the *Passions* seem to be the *material Subject* out of which all our moral Virtue is formed. The Sum of our moral Duty consists in bringing them to, and preserving them in, a true Balance. To endeavour therefore to root them out of the human Composition, in order to render the Operations of our Reason more perfect and easy; would be just as rational a Project, as it would be to destroy all the Subjects of a Prince in order to render his Government more complete and absolute. In a Word; the true and just Character of a *Man* is not to be without *Passions*, but to bring them all to a proper Temper.

The *Passions*, it is true, without Reason to prescribe and moderate their Motions, would, like the common Men in an Army, make but wild and disorderly Work; and therefore, after their first Rising, they ought not to stir one Step without regular Orders:

ders: but under a prudent Conduct it will be found, SERM.
 that the Interest of moral Virtue will be greatly pro- XI.
 moted by their Force and Activity. It is not the
 bare *Apprehension* of what is *Right* that determines
 us to act with Vigour and Resolution in the Pursuit
 of it; nor is it the bare *Discernment* of what is *Wrong*
 that creates in us a sufficient Aversion to it. No:
 our Perception and Judgment, in both Cases, must
 be reinforced by some more active and alarming
 Principles; in the former Case like Spurs to *incite*,
 in the latter like Bits to *restrain*: and these different
 Offices do our Passions respectively undertake, and
 effectually execute.

Since then the *simple* Act or Exercise of the Pas-
 sions is in itself *indifferent*, and becomes either *good*,
 or *otherwise*, by the Circumstances of the Object to
 which it is directed, the End it designs, and the De-
 gree of Temper wherewith it pursues that End; I
 propose in the following Discourse to shew,

Ist, In what Cases our *Anger* may be *innocently* in-
 dulged.

IIdly, When it becomes *intemperate* and *unlaw-
 ful*.

IIIIdly, As a *general* Motive to restrain us from *in-
 temperate* Anger, I will consider the Nature of it's
 opposite Virtue, *Meekness*. And,

Lastly, Subjoin some more *special* Considerations
 for the same Purpose.

First

SERM. — First then, I am to shew in what Cases our *Anger*
 XI. may be *innocently* indulged.

And here, that we may be able to form a more exact Judgment of the particular Cases I shall mention, it will be proper to apprise ourselves of the true Idea of *Anger*: which is defined, “a Displeasure of the Mind arising from the Apprehension of Injury, together with a Desire of removing it.” *Injury* must here be distinguished from *Natural Evil*, which may be brought upon us either by Men *undesignedly*, by Brute-Creatures, or even by Things inanimate: but *Injury* is *Evil* with *Design*, and therefore of a *moral* Consideration.

Again, the *Desire of removing Injury*, or the *Vindication of ourselves from Injury*, must be distinguished from *Revenge*: the latter supposes a Return of *Injury*, and nothing but a Return of *Injury*; but the former, though it may design bringing *Evil* or *Punishment* on the Injurious Person, yet it designs it not as it is *Evil*, but as it is *Good*: that is, that it may tend to, and procure, his Amendment and Reformation: and therefore such a Return is not *Revenge*.

From these Things thus premised, it will not be difficult to comprehend, that our *Anger* may be *innocently* indulged,

1. On the Approach of any injurious Aggressor threatening our Destruction, or using any Act of Violence that may endanger our Safety——Here the first Motions of our *Anger* spring from the Principle of Self-Preservation: and are so sudden and impetuous as often to prevent Deliberation: they are, in Truth, common to us with Children and the very
 Brutes;

Brutes ; and therefore the Actions, immediately consequent upon and produced by them, come rather under a *natural* than a *moral* Denomination. An additional Proof however, that *Anger* in *itself* is not *sinful*. But still, on the most mature Deliberation, we must be justified in consulting our own Security, according to the Degrees of the impending Danger ; and in Cases of extreme Necessity, that is, where no other possible Means can be contrived for our Preservation, we may repel Force by Force, and bring that Destruction on the Head of our Enemy which otherwise He would have brought upon Our's. Nor can this properly be called *Revenge* ; for our principal Design *here* is, not to inflict *deserved Injury*, but, to guard against an *Injury undeserved* ; and we *would have chosen* His Safety, had it been consistent with our *own*, without proceeding to this fatal Extremity.

And here, considering the daring and desperate Tempers of many wicked Men ; the weak Impressions they feel of any religious Principle, or Sentiment of Humanity ; the small Dread they have of the extremest Punishment that human Laws can inflict ; and the many Opportunities they may find of Secrecy to execute their villainous Purposes ; we cannot but admire the good Providence of God, and be thankful to Him, *whose Mercies are over all His Works*, that so few of us, in Comparison, are ever brought into these great Dangers. *The Wicked watcheth against the Righteous, and seeketh Occasion to slay him : The Lord will not let him come into his Hand.*—But to return.

SERM.

XI.

2. How far soever the harsh Gratings of *Anger* may seem to be removed from the soft Motions of *Benevolence*; yet *these* sometimes, as Oil does to Steel, give an Edge to our Resentment; where it will be found not only *innocent* and *excuseable*, but even *commendable* and *generous*. How are we affected with an Historical Relation, a Theatrical Representation, or even a poetical and feigned Description of Villainy under the Disguise of Friendship; helpless Innocence betrayed, dishonoured, or oppressed; merciless Cruelty inflicted, and the like? Our *Heart burns within us*, full of Resentment and Indignation; and our Tears force their Way. These Movements are deep-grounded in our Nature, and therefore irresistible: and if such be their Force in the Case of *Fiction*, or bare *Narration*, we cannot suppose it either is, or ought to be, diminished by *Reality*: and if they carry us so far in Behalf of *Others*, they must be allowed at least an Equal Scope and Liberty in Behalf of *Ourselves*.

Hence it appears, that *Benevolence*, *disinterested Benevolence*, presides in human Nature; and unites Mankind into a Society so intimate; that, however distant the several Members may be, one common Sensation, as it were, runs through the Whole. And, as in the Natural System of the World, there are some *repelling* Qualities, which yet must conspire to aid the grand Power of *Attraction*; so even those Passions which, considered in a simple View, have but an unfriendly and *unsociable* Aspect, are yet, in their general Comprehension, aiding and assisting to preserve inviolable the *Bonds* of the great Community.

3. Our

3. Our Anger is apt to kindle at the Apprehension of a Slight, or an Affront; a Contempt or Reproach thrown upon us: on which Occasions, if the Apprehension be well-grounded, our Resentment, to a certain Degree, must be allowed to be *excuseable*; and so not *sinful*. Our Tameness in these Instances would be construed into Stupidity, and be treated as such, by the pert and petulant. Peace and Honesty, and the Reputation of Honesty, are the greatest worldly Possessions that many Men have, or desire to have; and the Invaders of them, especially They who take a Pleasure in, or make a Sport of, depriving others of the Enjoyment of them by an unmannerly Behaviour, rude Insults, or provoking Language; may be, and ought to be, treated with such Marks of Disapprobation and Displeasure, as may be a sufficient Guard for us against the Assaults of these Tresspassers: nay, I do not know but a greater Indulgence may be allowed to our Resentment on these Occasions, where Human Laws have not allowed us the Privilege of their Assistance and Protection.

But it may be inquired, How is the *Lawfulness* of Anger, in *all* or *any* of the foregoing Instances, consistent with the Command given by our Saviour, *not to resist Evil*: but to subdue our Nature to such a Degree of Passiveness, as, if *any one should smite us on the Right Cheek, to turn to him the other also*?

I answer, these Words admit of an Interpretation very consistent with What has been advanced in Defence of *lawful* Anger. The Law of *Retaliation* was here the Subject of our Saviour's Discourse, which either in it's original Intention *did*, or rather perhaps, by the corrupt Glosses of the *Jewish* Doc-

SERM. tors was made to signify a Repaying in Kind every
 XI. bodily Injury a Man received; *an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth.* Accidental and undesigned Injuries were excepted out of this Law; and therefore we must consider the Injuries included in it to be *Injuries* strictly speaking: that is, accompanied with *Malice* and *Hatred*. Accordingly, the Temper of the Aggressor, in the Instance before us, is apparently *malicious*; and this Temper our Saviour condemns to such a Degree, as to command us rather to submit to such malicious Treatment *doubly*, than return it *once*. The greatest Indignities a Christian can suffer will not justify in him a Spirit of Malice and Revenge. *He is to recompence no Man Evil for Evil*—But there is a very distinct Medium between *this*, and consulting *no Methods* at all for his Redress, even of the smallest Injuries; and that is, by endeavouring to obtain such Redress by innocent Means; which are plainly these; that, in bringing the Offender to Punishment, or to a Sense of his Miscarriage, we take Care the Degrees of our Resentment do not exceed the Nature of the Offence; and that we have a Regard, not only to our *own* Good, but to *that* of the Public, and even to *that* of the Offender himself; without being acted by the least Mixture of Malice. And thus it is that a Parent resents and punishes Disobedience, or other Misbehaviour, in his Child; and yet retains for him at the same Time the highest Degrees of Benevolence.

4. We may not only be *angry* without *sinning*, in the Instances alledged; as we sometimes may *sin* in *not* being angry. God, who designed Human Society, designed the Good of it; and That Good to be

be promoted by every Individual to the utmost of his Power. Hereby there is tacitly committed to every Man a Kind of Trust and Guardianship of Virtue, whose Rights he is obliged to support and maintain in Proportion to his Abilities; not only by Example, by Advice and Exhortation; but even by Reproof and Resentment, suitable to the Circumstances of the Offender and the Offence. Whoever, therefore, can bring himself to a careless and cold Indifferency, or calm Unconcernedness in hearing any profane or impious Discourse, or in beholding any cruel, outrageous or oppressive Action, becomes in some Measure an Encourager and Abettor of them: and makes himself *accountable* for them in Proportion to his Power of preventing them. And consequently, They who obtain any Degree of Superiority (whether *natural*, as that of Parents, or *civil*, as that of Magistrates and Governors) are still under more weighty Obligations, not only to note and censure, but even to check and chastise the Irregularities, the Faults and Vices of those under their immediate Care and Inspection. Their Authority is an additional Ground for their Resentment; and their Resentment will greatly enforce their Authority. Anger manifests itself in so many awful Forms, as never fail of affecting the Imagination, and leaving sometimes very memorable Impressions. When the Children of *Israel* were guilty of a gross Act of Idolatry, in worshipping the Golden Calf, we read that *Moses's Anger was exceeding hot, and he brake the Tables of the Covenant*. It has been remarked, that *Moses* did not break the Tables till he approached near the Camp, that he might the better testify his Resent-

SERM. ment against, and make those Idolaters more sensible
 XI. of, their great Wickedness. And lest this Example
 of *Moses* should be thought insufficient for authorizing our Practice; we have the Examples of a *greater than Moses* to justify and encourage it, which is that of our Saviour Himself, who was *so grieved* with the *Pharisees*, for *the Hardness of their Heart*, that he *looked about on them with Anger*. This is a sufficient Warrant for allowing Anger and Resentment a Place in our reproofing the Vices of Children, Servants, or others, placed in any Degree of Subjection to us: the Danger often lies in the contrary Excess; too great Lenity and Forbearance. How great a Guilt is hereby incurred will best appear by the Severity of it's Punishment in *Eli* the High-Priest of *Israel*, and at the same Time a supreme *Magistrate* and a *Father*: Let every Father hear, and those who are guilty tremble, at the Denunciation of God's Judgment, which was afterwards punctually fulfilled — *And the Lord said — I will perform against Eli all Things which I have spoken concerning his House — I will judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* As *Eli* was otherwise a strictly-religious and good Man; We should have been weak enough to think, that Forgiveness might have been extended to a single Failing, a Failing of this Sort, in a Father, a very old Father: no; it was a Sin that was not to be purged away with Sacrifice nor Offering for ever.

But soasmuch as the Occasions of exercising law-ful Anger are but few; and Resentment does not want so often, or so much to be excited where it may be

be *proper*, as to be curbed and restrained where it is *not so*: let us consider, SERM.
XI.

Illy, When our *Anger* becomes *intemperate* and *unlawful*. And it is undeniably so,

1. When it breaks out into *outrageous Actions*: for then, like a boisterous Wind, it quite puts out that Light which should *guide our Feet in the Way of Peace*: it dethrones Reason, and suspends it's Exercise: An Extravagance of this Kind is the more dangerous, and therefore the more sinful, because, though the Impulse of Passion should meet with no Opposition to inflame it, which however is generally the Case; yet when it has worked the Blood into so violent a Ferment, it is apt of itself to redouble it's Force. And no one can tell what Fury, wound up to the highest Pitch, may produce. A Man is now become the Instrument of his own Passion, and may be made to act such Tragedies as he could not think of before without Horror. Great Reason therefore have we to implore the Grace of God, that we be not led so far into this Temptation. The Man that, an Hour before, seemed to be guided by a sober Sense of Religion, is now got beyond the Line of Reason, and is seen to break through all the Restraints of Decency, Humanity and Virtue, to satiate his Vengeance in the Blood of his Fellow-Creatures. A *passionate* Man is every Moment liable to do that which he may ever after repent: like the *Horse rushing into the Battle*, and by a savage and fierce Instinct bearing down all before him; but receiving Wounds, the Pains whereof will ever after be felt. For the Pleasure which arises from the gratifying this Passion is

SERM. but momentary : it is like the Lightning that gilds
 XI. the Storm, a Flash of Joy, and then all again is
 overcast, gloomy and frightful.

2. Anger becomes *unlawful* when it vents itself in unseemly and reviling Language. It were to be wished that Those who have such a peculiar Delicacy of Feeling when they are affronted, would abstain from all Appearance of an affrontive and disrespectful Behaviour to others : that They who are so quick to *receive*, would be as slow to *give*, an Affront. On the contrary, it often happens, that they only feel for themselves ; They are not the least sensible of the Indignities offered to others. How frequently do those, who are highly enraged, pass a general and undistinguishing Censure upon a Man's Character ? They allow nothing commendable in it. Contrary to the Rules of candid Artists, whatever is beautiful, is either overlooked, or thrown into Shades : whatever is deformed, is exaggerated, heightened, and exposed in the fullest Light. And on this View they pronounce Judgment, and *shoot out their Arrows even bitter Words* : little regarding how deep they wound ; though frequently, like poisoned Arrows, the Wounds they give are incurable.

Some indeed are too apt to *excuse* themselves, and express their *Hopes*, and *imagine* that God will *forgive* them ; because they pretend, that they are borne away into such extravagant Licences by a sudden Discomposure of Mind, which quite transported them beyond themselves. And it must be allowed, that sometimes He, who has Virtue very much at Heart, may, on a sudden Surprise of Passion, be tempted to *speak unadvisedly with his Lips*. But it happens

happens but too frequently, that those who put in this SERM.
XI.
Plea, have no Claim to it. For what if this Passion, which they pretend to be a *Frailty*, prove really a *Fault*? And in general it will be found, that haughty, *opprobrious* Language is not so much owing to a Man's *sudden* Temptation to Anger as to an inward *standing Habit* of Contempt, which that *occasional* Temptation, by throwing Him off His Guard, manifested and exposed to View. A secret, unsuspected *Pride* then, the settled Temper of our Minds may be the *original* Cause of disdainful and contemptuous Expressions, and a Surprize of *Passion* only the *Occasion* of discovering that Temper by such Expressions.

In vain therefore do such Persons seek to screen themselves from Guilt, by resting the Occasion of it on the ungoverned Bursts, or unguarded Sallies of *Passion*; since they habitually encourage *another* ill Affection of the Mind, which is sure to set their *Passion* at Work. As well may the Intemperate complain, that they cannot secure themselves against the Attacks of many Distempers from the Weakness of their Constitution, when their *Intemperance* has been the true Occasion of that *Weakness*. But,

3dly, We are not always to judge of the *Sinfulness of Anger* from the open and undisguised Appearance of it, either in our *Words* or *Actions*: it may be concealed and treasured up in our *Thoughts*, and yet retain as much *Malignity* as when it immediately breaks out and discovers itself in *contumelious Language*, or *Acts of Violence*. For, by brooding in the Mind, it becomes the Parent of a very untoward Issue, *Malice* and *Hatred*.

Malice

SERMON. *Malice* is a cool and deliberate Resentment; but
 XX sometimes more keen and malevolent than that
 which is rash and precipitate. It is like a massy
 Stone, slowly raised; but threatening the greater
 Danger to Him on whom it shall fall. Many, I
 question not, are apt to sooth themselves with the
 deceitful Thought, that they are Men of *Temper*
 and *Patience*, because, on very great Provocations,
 they can so far smother and suppress the first Impulse
 of *Passion*, as not to betray any strong Symptoms of
 it; when all the while their *Coolness* is owing to
 nothing better than their *Cowardice*. The Veil that
 is flung over their Fury does not alter it's real Com-
 plexion, it only enables it to act with less Suspicion,
 and therefore with greater Security at a more proper
 Opportunity. The Heat of Anger thus concealed
 then, may be as injurious as that which immediately
 discharges itself, and evaporates in a sudden Flame:
 but the Guilt of the *Malicious* is aggravated in this,
 that he acts with more Deliberation than those of a
hot and *fiery* Temper. He has Time to debate the
 Matter coolly with Himself; to call in the Councils
 of Reason and Prudence; and to sue for the Suc-
 cours of Grace. All this he may do, and ought to
 do: And if either through a wilful Omission of this,
 or in Spite of all the Remonstrances of Reason and
 Conscience, He still perseveres in the determined
 Resolution of executing His wicked Purposes; His
 Sin, thus heightened with every Circumstance of
 Presumption, becomes exceeding sinful.

But farther, Anger is yet *sinful* when encouraged
 in our *Thoughts* to the Degree of *Hatred*. For
 though our Resentment, in this View, may not run

so high as to suggest any evil Designs of *injuring* a Man in His Person or Property; or though it should spare, what it very seldom spares, His Reputation; yet still it is apt to cherish an *evil Disposition* towards Him. It inclines us to rejoice at the Misfortunes that befall Him, or at least to be unconcerned for them: it restrains many Acts of our Benevolence towards Him, when it would be equally our own Interest to perform them: nay it may turn away our Eyes from Him in the Day of His extreme Adversity and Affliction.

Now it is certain, there is no Man, who retains the least Sense of Humanity, but *wishes* to live in a good Understanding with all Mankind; abstracting from every Consideration, but the pleasing Reflection that naturally arises in the Mind from such a Situation. The Reason of this we need not inquire at present: it is enough that every Man feels this social Desire so strong in His own Heart. Why then will any One chuse to practise such a strange Sort of Self-Denial as to rob His own Breast of such pleasureable Emotions, for no Reason but to rob His Fellow-Creatures of the same? This is not only hindering Good, or, what amounts to the same, doing Evil, for Evil's Sake, (the Temper of the most accursed Spirit) it is yet worse; it is doing Evil to ourselves for the Sake of doing Evil to others. But, "Is it not a *Pleasure* to us when we *rejoice* at the Misfortunes of Others; and therefore are we not still in the Possession of *Pleasure*?" A *Pleasure* it is, but a *Pleasure* arising from *Passion* only: a *Pleasure* that will not endure the Test of *Reason*, or the Survey of *Reflection*: and therefore an unnatural brutish, and

SERM. and savage Pleasure: All which is evident from this

XI. that when Time has in Part obliterated, and at last
 totally effaced, the deformed Image of Hatred; we
 find a thorough Complacency and Satisfaction at the
 Retreat and final Farewel of so unwelcome a Guest.
 And this is still farther confirmed from the Joy that
 arises on the Reconciliation of Persons at Variance.
 What tumultuous Transports, think we, must have
 filled the Hearts of *Jacob* and *Esau* at their first In-
 terview; when the Current of Brotherly Love had
 been so long interrupted between them? Take the
 Account of it in the inimitable Simplicity of Scrip-
 tural Language: *And JACOB lifted up His Eyes, and
 looked, and behold ESAU came, and JACOB — bowed
 Himself to the Ground seven Times, until He came near
 to His Brother: and ESAU ran to meet Him, and em-
 braced Him, and fell on His Neck, and kissed Him:
 and they wept.*

Were ever Revenge, Malice, or Hatred accom-
 panied with such grateful Sensations, such kindly
 Overflowings of Joy and Gladness in the Heart?
 No: *Benevolence*, on such Occurrences, asserts the
 Right of supreme Dominion in the Human Constitu-
 tion, and triumphs over all the Tribe of the *unsocial*
 Affections. We are convinced of our Folly in re-
 volting from Her gentle Sways to be enslaved by Ty-
 rants, and terrified by Monsters. This Conviction
turns our Hearts; which again are *softened* by a
 Mixture of Shame and Repentance for our Fault:
 and now, Joy pouring in upon them, the Joy of be-
 ing restored to the peaceful Possession of ourselves,
 and replaced in the Affection of our Friends, excites
 those

those distressful, yet pleasing Agonies, which seek for Relief in the like distressful and pleasing Flow of our Tears. SERM. XI.

Do Men ever take Delight in being Witnesses of the Quarrels, Animosities, and Heart-Burnings among either their Friends or Enemies? But, on such Occasions as these, when Tears testify the Sincerity of mutual Affection of Hearts reconciled and united; who can so far restrain his Joy, as not to *rejoice with those that do rejoice*; and, at the same Time, to *weep with those that weep*?

Thus, we find, whenever our Anger rises so high as to stop, or drive back, the Streams of Benevolence; it throws us into an uneasy, violent and convulsive State. And hence it appears, that the Command of *loving our Enemies*, which has been thought an *hard Saying*, and impossible to be fulfilled, is really no more, when resolved into it's first Principles, than bidding us *be at Peace with ourselves*; which we cannot be, so long as we continue at Enmity with others. The Command is not less agreeable to the true Spirit of *Morality*, than it is to that Love and Charity, which breathe through all the *Gospel*.

And in Conformity to this, and the View that we have taken of the *general Cases of sinful Anger*; let me apply the Words of the Apostle, exhibiting the natural Gradations of it: *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice* — As a general Motive to which I proceed, as I proposed in the

III. Third Place, to consider it's opposite Virtue, *Meekness*.

This

SERM.

XI.

This was a Virtue which our Blessed Saviour was pleased in an especial Manner to recommend in His own Example: *Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* The Characters of Persons are generally strongly marked in Scripture; and though two Men are described as having the same Quality; yet it is diversified as to some Particulars in each. It has some distinguishing Features which shew it to be *that Man's*, and not another's. There is not a more remarkable Instance of this, than the Difference of Behaviour in our Saviour and St. Paul under the same Treatment. Both of them were struck in a Court of Judicature: but one of them replies, *If I have done Evil, bear Witness of the Evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* The other — *God shall smite thee, thou whited Wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law?* Both of them speak in Character: our Saviour, with that well-governed Spirit, and gentle Wisdom, which kept Him at the utmost Distance from unruly Passion: The Apostle, with that animated and spirited Wisdom, which, though it did not suffer him to say any Thing, but what such an extraordinary Provocation warranted; or to be transported into *unlawful Anger*; yet he stood on the very Confines of what *was so*. In a Word, the Conduct of our Saviour presents us with a Pattern, an unallayed Pattern of *Meekness*: That of the Apostle seems not quite free from a certain Tincture of human Frailty.

Meekness is, as *Aristotle* long ago defined it, a due Mean between Tameness and Stupidity on the one Hand, and Rage and Fury on the other. It is not
absolute

absolute Freedom from Passion, but such a Command over it as to prevent our being transported beyond the Bounds of Humanity and good Sense. It is this Virtue which, if it does not give a Man such a glaring and shining Figure as some other good Qualities; yet constitutes the most lovely, beautiful, and agreeable Character, and gains unenvied Praise. If it does not draw the Eyes of the World so much upon it's Possessor, and attract our Admiration as some other Accomplishments, yet nothing endears us more to the Affection of Mankind than the *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit*.

But, to be more particular, let us take a View of this Virtue in it's peculiar Symptoms and Characters.

And,

1st, A Meek Man will have Sense enough to know when he is injured, and Spirit enough to resent it; but then he will consider whether he can do more Good by openly resenting an Offence and punishing the Offender, than by overlooking it and passing it by. It is a Rule with him, never to say or do any unkind Thing, except when there is some Necessity for it; either with Regard to himself, or the Public. And the Reason is as follows: where there is no Reason for Severity, when no valuable and desirable End can be compassed thereby, there is always a Reason against it; — “it is an unnecessary and “useless Severity.” Nay, he cannot even *see* a Person in Pain, though he does not give it, without *feeling*, in some Measure, what he *sees*.

As soon as any Affront is offered, it is the Language of Passion — “Such an Indignity is not to “be borne — Such an Offence is intolerable —

“ it

SERM. "it would be Tameness not to punish it." But if

XI. calm Reason might put in it's Plea; it would say
 — "What Benefit do you propose to Yourself?
 — "Do you take vindictive Measures merely to
 "gratify Your exorbitant Passion, a turbulent In-
 "cendiary in your Breast; which is a greater Enemy
 "to your Peace than any You have? Or is it your
 "Intention to reform the injurious Person; to pro-
 "mote the Welfare of Society and Your own?"

2dly, A Man of a meek Temper will distinguish between a Man's general *standing* Sentiments, when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed; and his *occasional* Sentiments, when his Spirits are ruffled and over-heated. He will consider what he is for a *Constancy* towards him, and what he may be now and then, when some cross Accident may have sowered his Temper; or some Passion clouded and disturbed his Reason. And such a Consideration is absolutely necessary to preserve Friendship, and to keep up Peace and Harmony among those that live constantly, or converse often, together. No Union could be lasting, if every Thing that was occasionally let fall should be gathered up and circulated with the Additions which are generally made by officious, and sometimes malicious, Intermeddlers. Unkindly Thoughts, which vent themselves in unfriendly Expressions, may be only occasional Visitors; which tarry but an Hour; whereas tender and endearing Sentiments of us may be the constant and welcome Inhabitants of the Mind. A meek Man will never break off any Intimacy with a Friend upon the Account of some angry Reflexions unsuitable to his general, habitual Way of Thinking; he will

will consider, it is impossible to maintain a friendly Intercourse without making Allowances for such Infirmitities. And He who says or thinks he has discharged every Duty, without any Failure, in Point of Kindness and Friendliness to his Domestics and near Neighbours; has forgot one Duty in Respect of himself — *that* of Self-Examination; for the least Recollection will serve to shew, that he has sometimes, to Persons near him or about him, said or done Things, that had better have been left unsaid or undone: and has omitted to do kind Things, which ought to have been done — that he has been out of Humour sometimes when there *was not* sufficient Reason to be so, and has gone too far when there *was*. A Man of a gentle Nature will therefore make proper Abatements; and be inclined to think that, as a generous Enemy may sometimes, through a Flush of good Humour, and an extraordinary Flow of Spirit, say an handsome Thing in our Behalf, and deviate into Praise; so a firm Friend, through a Surprize of Ill-Humour, may put on an angry Look, or drop a disobliging Expression.

And whereas an hasty Temper is immediately for proceeding to Extremities; a meek Temper goes more leisurely to Work, and consults the softest Seasons of Address to advise with a Man: *perhaps he has not said it; and, if he hath, that he say it no more.* And indeed without such a Procedure, all Friendships would be precarious; they would lie at the Mercy of every one that was malicious enough to do us an ill Office:

3dly, A Meek Man will never be angry with a Person for telling Him what He imagines to be a

SERM. Fault in him, provided it be done in a private Manner, and the Advice be conveyed in the most palatable Vehicle. For should the Fault be purely imaginary, and the Censure wrong-directed, yet no Harm is done, and he will be obliged to his friendly Adviser for his good Intentions: But if the Censure should fall in the right Place, he will be doubly obliged to him, both for his good Intentions, and for the real Good he hath done him, by shewing him to himself, and putting it in his Power to make himself better by correcting his Mistakes.

When a Friend gives us to understand, that he has our Interest at Heart, this opens all the Avenues to our Mind; strengthens and enforces his Admonitions; so that they never fail to make deeper Impressions upon us, than the most masterly Strokes of a Book of Morality. We consider the *Author* as influenced by a Motive of doing Good in General; whereas the Friend is actuated by a Concern for us in Particular; and this gives a considerable Weight to his Advice. They who speak affectionately and sincerely from their *own* Hearts, generally speak affectionately and powerfully to the Hearts of *others*.

And the plain Language of an open Heart, a frank and undesigning Breast, sooner stamps Conviction upon the Mind, than the well-turned Periods and artificial Ornaments of the finest Orator that ever lived.

A Man of a meek Spirit is glad to be reconciled to the Person who has offended or injured him; and therefore is ready to hearken to all Overtures of Accommodation. When he who hath made himself an Adversary comes and accosts him with

the Salutation of *Jehu* to *Jonadab*; *Is thy Heart right, as my Heart is with thy Heart? if it be, give me thy Hand*: He answers with *Jonadab*, *it is*: and gives him his Hand. He receives him with open Arms, as a Friend returning from a strange Country. Indeed when a Man sits in Judgment on a Cause between himself and us, and gives Sentence in our Favour; what can we desire more? The Offence was the Effect of *Passion*, the Acknowledgment the Result of *Reason*. To appease our *Passion* he has made a Sacrifice of his *own* — and shall we not accept the Offering, but sacrifice our Reason, and even our Humanity, to our *Passion*? Such an humble Demeanour, one would think, should bring down even the *high Looks of the Proud*: because he finds his Adversary has done, what He himself thinks the most difficult of all Things to be done; he has divested himself of *Pride*. A Meek Man, however, on such Occasions will call to Mind the Command of our Saviour; *If thy Brother trespass against Thee seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day return unto Thee, saying, I repent; Forgive Him*. A Command that carries with it two Suppositions, either of them sufficient to subdue the most stubborn and unrelenting Heart: *If thy Brother trespass against Thee seven Times in a Day* — A sad Intimation of the hourly Infirmities which Human Nature is liable to! an Object of our Pity, though we were not in the same *Condemnation*: but as we are, and as he is our *Brother*; the Sense of Pity ought to strike the deeper. And moreover, *if he turn unto Thee* — if conscious of his Fault he comes to us, as if we were in God's Stead, professes his Repentance, and be-

SERM. teaches our Pardon; we should be almost ashamed
 XI. of accepting such Condescension and Submission;
 and be sorry that we did not prevent his humble
 Application, by a voluntary Tender of Forgiveness:
 Forgiveness? — Alas! what can we forgive? His
 Sin? Human Pride has not yet pretended to assume
 that Power; and human Piety will pray God to for-
 give it: and it may be, God has forgiven it on our
 Brother's Repentance. But his *Punishment*? — Man,
 sinful Man, is ready and willing to think himself a
 proper Object of *God's Mercy*; and yet can hardly
 bear to think a Man, less sinful than himself, the
 Object of his *own*.

In few Words; A *Meek* Man will shew such an
 Inclination and Readiness to forgive the Offences of
 Others, as if He had perpetual Need of the same
 Indulgence; but will so carefully avoid giving the
 least Offence, as if it might be thought, He would
 forgive No-body.

If the View we have taken of this peaceable,
 gentle and amiable Virtue has not made Impressions
 sufficient to fortify us against the *Excessive* Degrees
 of *Anger*; let us,

Lastly, Call in to our farther Assistance some more
direct and *particular* Considerations. And,

1st. It is very weakly objected by some, that it is
 not in their Power to withstand and quell the out-
 rageous Assaults of *Passion*. This may be very true,
 if they have taken no Pains for that Purpose. Our
 Passions are naturally of the unruly Kind; and, in
 order to bring them under due Command, much
 Labour, and not less Skill and Management, are re-
 quired. And it would not be amiss, perhaps, if a
 Man

Man were to prescribe a particular Course of Discipline over each of them in their Turn: during which Time, besides a general Regard, they should demand his especial and most particular Care. This seems to have been the Method of a Renowned Emperor; Renowned, not more for His admirable Government of the *Roman Empire*, than for the equally admirable Government of Himself. And if the Order of his *Meditations* was guided by that of his *Practice*; it is pertinent to remark, that * He began his Home-Regulation by acquiring a *Gentleness of Behaviour*, and a *Freedom from Passion*.

Now, if nothing of this Kind hath been attempted by those who are so ready to complain of their Infirmities, as if they took a secret Satisfaction in them; all that we can collect from their Complaint is, that, in Effect, *they charge God foolishly*; they charge *That* on His Workmanship, which is owing to their own gross Negligence.

But notwithstanding all this, it is almost impossible for them not to recollect some Occasions, when, upon the Foresight and Expectation of some quarrelsome and litigious Interview, they have resolved to be upon their Guard; and, by such Resolution, have foreclosed and dammed up every Inlet of extravagant Passion. They must recollect likewise some other less-guarded Seasons, when they suffered themselves to be borne away with the Tempest of Rage, (and were thereby betrayed into the greatest Indecencies) upon cool Reflection afterwards, they were almost as

* Παρά τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ καλῆς, ὡς ἀγγέλλει. ΜΑΡΚ. ΑΝΤΩΝ. Β' 61.
6. §. I.

SERM. angry with themselves for their Indiscretion in letting

XI. loose the Reins of their Fury. A virtual Confession

This, that it was owing to their own Neglect, in not seasonably setting a Watch *before the Door of their Lips*; and, by that Precaution, holding their Tongues *as it were with a Bridle*.

God certainly did not give us Reason, That distinguishing Prerogative of our Nature, That Candle which He hath lighted up in our Breasts, to be blown out with every accidental Gust of *Passion*: to be as a *Reed shaken with every Wind*, and broken down by any strong one. Either we *have* strong Passions, or we *have not*: If we have *not*, we derive from Nature that happy Composure of Temper, and that Absence of revengeful Thoughts, which Others must take great Pains to acquire by all the Helps of Religion and Philosophy. And therefore, we *who are strong* ought to be more ready to *bear with the Infirmities of the Weak*. If we have strong, vigorous and warm Passions: then those Sparks are capable of inflaming the Soul with a strong Desire of attaining, and giving it a Kind of additional Life and Spirit actually to attain, every Thing that is great, worthy and honourable. The *Passions* are the Wings that enable us to rise above every Thing that is despicable, low and earthly; and therefore should dispose us to contemn, or more easily to conquer, every Thing that lies in our Way to the most excellent Wisdom, and most sublime Virtue.

In short, it may not be in our Power always to *speak* and *act* so well as we might wish, for Want of Abilities or Opportunities; but it is *always* in our Power to *forbear acting* or *speaking*.

2dly,

2dly, We may call to Mind a whole Sect of *Philosophers* with their Followers; who, by the mere Power of Discipline (enforced purely by Considerations drawn from the Dignity of Human Nature, Self-Repose, and Benevolence to Mankind) entirely suppressed all the disorderly Ferments of *Passion*; and that, on the most trying Occasions. Now, methinks, a Disciple of *Jesus Christ* should blush to observe, that the weak and *beggarly Elements* of *Philosophy* should have impowered the Espousers of them, to reach a more sublime Point in the Practice of any Virtue, than the divine Energy of the *Holy Scriptures*. Those *Scriptures*, which do not only enjoin and encourage the Practice of all *Meekness* and *Gentleness* from the most engaging and interesting Motives, but which exhibit the most perfect Pattern of them in our *Lord and Master*; who left it too as the distinguishing Mark of his true Disciples, that they *should love one another*: those *Scriptures*, which will render Him that reads them with a *proper* Disposition, *thoroughly furnished to every good Work*; with a Disposition influenced by that *Holy Spirit*, which will *lead us into all Truth*, and incline us to all Goodness. But it is with Religion, as it is with Government: the best Constitution of Government ill administered, will not produce so salutary Effects, as a *bad* one whose Laws are duly enforced. It would be too long, in this Place, to enter into a Detail of the Reasons, why the Practice of Christians falls so short of their Principles. To save the Honour of our Holy Religion, at present let it only be observed (what is greatly to the Dishonour of Mankind) that a *wrong* Principle, if it meets with a strong Opposition, will often carry

SERM. Men farther in Support of it, than *one* that is ground-
 XI. ed on sound Reason and true Religion, if left to act
 at it's own Liberty, and meeting with no Controul.
 The *Stoics* thought all the *Passions* absolutely evil;
 and we have a *Sect* among ourselves that look upon
Anger in general in the same Light. The Inference
 we should draw from their greater Strictness and Se-
 verity in Practice is this: that we ought to possess
 our Minds with a strong Affection, a fervent Zeal, I
 had almost said, with a *Passion* for our Religion. In
 vain do we boast of the Purity of it, either in *this*,
 or any *other* Respect, if we see ourselves outdone in
 Practice, either by the * *Heatbens*, or those who hold
 the *Truth of it in Unrighteousness*. That our Reli-
 gion is most fit to inspire a true Temper of *Meekness*
 and *Humility*, and of every other Virtue, we cannot
 doubt; it has been tried in the Times of Persecution,
 and, like *Gold purified in the Fire*, has appeared with
 greater Splendor, and still retained it's intrinsic
 Worth. Unworthy are we of the Blessing of Deli-
 verance from that dreadful State: if a Security from
 Danger shall encourage a Licentiousness of Life.
 Rather let the Consideration of that inestimable Blef-
 sing, as it is a very rational, be a standing and effec-
 tual Motive in our Hearts of the more punctual Per-
 formance of every Duty, now become so practicable
 and easy.
 3dly, Let us endeavour to acquire a Greatness of
 Mind: by this I do not mean *Arrogance*, for that be-
 speaks

* Subit me certè subinde—non Stupor duntaxat sed Horror etiam
 —serio apud me reputantem, quàm longè in multis ab eo abfim,
 quod de se Vir iste (*Marcus Antoninus*) veri ad salutem perducen-
 tis Tramitis ignarus de se profitetur, nec quin verè & ingenuè, am-
 bigi posse videtur.

Gatakeri Præloq. ad Marc. Anton.

speaks a little Mind, a Mind than can reflect on nothing within itself that *looks* great except Arrogance: but a true Greatness of Mind arises from a true Judgment of Things, and a noble Ascendency of the Soul inclining us to act above what is barely our Duty. It is rising to the Sublime in Virtue. This will create a Reverence for ourselves, and will set us as far above the mean Gratification of giving any real Occasion of *Passion* to others; as of being susceptible of it when an Occasion may be given to us. We see how often Children, upon the most frivolous Grounds, kindle into Fury, and fall into Fits and Agonies; we see it, but do not think it worth our Notice, much less our Provocation. And how often do we see Men copying this Example on Occasions altogether as unmomentous? A Man of a superior Turn of Mind pays an equal Regard to Both; or rather pays a less Regard to the Latter, in Proportion as they make themselves hereby less than Children.

One of the Antients said, that he had gained one Advantage from Philosophy; that it had brought him to wonder at Nothing. But it looks as if we, the Generality of us, were Strangers in the World, we are ever expressing our Surprise and Wonder at every Thing; and this Surprise prepares the Way for *Passion*. We wonder that we should meet with such a Behaviour, such a Treatment, such an Affront; whereas the greatest Wonder is, that we should wonder at it. A Man of sound Judgment soon takes such a Survey of Mankind, that he expects many Occurrences of that Sort. He expects to meet with Haughtiness from the Proud, Contempt from the Rich, Ill-manners from the Vulgar, both great

SEEM. great and small; foolish Talking and Impertinence
 XI. from the Ignorant and Conceited: He is prepared
 to meet with all this, and therefore no Way disconcerted when he does. He has reached a very excellent Point in Wisdom; he has learned to be unconcerned at the Follies of Mankind; to be unconcerned, because they are Follies. With an erect and vigorous, but calm and considerate Resolution, he advances in the High-road of Virtue; and, like one of the *Persian* Nobles, thinks it beneath his Wisdom and Dignity to stop short, and turn about to gaze at any Thing. He is placed in an upper Region; out of the Reach of all the Clouds, Vapours and Exhalations that infest the Atmosphere of the Earth. The very *Suspicion* that a Man is despised, betrays a Consciousness of his own Littleness and Inferiority; but a Man of a truly great Mind thinks, and very rationally thinks, every Man that despises him, below him. He will rise so high as to do a good Office to, or bestow a Favour on the Man that has injured him, as considering his Adversary has thereby done himself *more* Injury: and that if he does not by this Means overcome him; he will at least make him ashamed of his Enmity and Opposition.

But, *Lastly*, Nothing can have so prevalent a Power to still all the undue Agitations of *Passion*, so apt to arise from the various Connexions we have with the Prejudices and Passions of others; nothing so fit to induce a smooth and easy Flow of Temper, as a frequent Application to the Throne of Grace, to beseech Him who is *the God of Peace*, that *His Peace may rule in our Hearts*; that it may be the fixed and predominant Principle there. This *Presence with the*
 Lord

Lord is a Kind of *Absence from the Body*; an Absence SERM.
XI.
from all the vain Imaginations, the Tumult of the
Passions, and the sinful Thoughts which they sug-
gest. The pure and serene Complacency that springs
up in the Soul by this Intercourse with Heaven, shews
that *here* she is nearest the Centre of her true Happi-
ness; where the greatest Things of the Earth lose all
their Power of Attraction. The awful Contempla-
tion of God's Greatness, and the Sense of our Little-
ness, but too powerfully impressed by the mortifying
View of our Infirmities, will soon bring us to a Con-
viction that *Pride*, the great Source of intemperate
Passion, was not *made for Man*. The due Prepara-
tion of the Heart to wait upon God in this serious
and solemn Exercise will be of admirable Use to re-
move far from us all *malicious, uncharitable and unbe-
nevolent* Thoughts. Strange! that these should find
a Place in our Hearts, but for an Hour, against
Those whom we expect to be the Associates of our
Happiness to all Eternity.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X I I .

**The Happiness of the GOOD in a
Future State.**

**Preached in TWICKENHAM-CHAPEL the
Sunday after Dr. WATERLAND'S
Interment.**

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

*Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; Thou
hast been faithful over a few Things, I will
make thee Ruler over many Things; enter thou
into the Joy of thy Lord.*

SERM.
XII.

BY the good and faithful Servant in this Text, is meant one, that has improved the Talents, which were entrusted with him, to the Advancement of Religion, and the Good of Mankind: By being *Ruler over many Things, and entering into the Joy of his Lord*, is shadowed out the future Happiness of those, who have discharged their Duty faithfully.

I have made Choice of these Words, with a Design to draw the Character of a very faithful Servant, the late worthy Minister of this Parish, and Archdeacon of this County; after I have, in the first Place,

Place, briefly described the Joys of Heaven, and the Nature of that Happiness which our Saviour has, by his Revelation, displayed; and, by his Merits, ensured to us. SERM.
XII.

Some Philosophers and Divines of the first Distinction have imagined the Soul to have several Faculties, which, though she cannot now display them, while her Operations are clogged and encumbered by Matter, will shoot out and exert themselves, as soon as she is divorced from this gross corruptible Body.

But, however this be; whether some Faculties are originally vested in the Mind, which are to be hereafter new Inlets of Pleasure; or whether God will superadd new Capacities to it; it is undoubtedly certain, that our Bliss will be as great, as our enlarged Soul, the Subject of it, can then receive; and greater than our narrow Understanding can at present comprehend.

The chief Ingredients of our future Happiness we may, however, proceed to mark out, viz.

I. The Perfections of Soul and Body.

II. The blessed Society and the Place.

III. The Enjoyment of the Godhead.

As to the first,

If in this World, when the Soul must have a grosser Way of thinking, as immersed in the Dregs of Matter, a well-regulated Mind, and an enlarged Understanding, are yet considerable Springs of Pleasure;

with

SERM. with what exquisite Joy will they affect us, when we
 XII. shall throw off this dull Mortality, when our Bodies
 shall be fashioned in the glorious Likeness of our
 Redeemer's, and our Souls transformed into the
 Image of our Creator? *Now we see through a Glass
 darkly; but then (in a future State) Face to Face.
 Now I know in Part, says St. Paul, but then I shall
 know, even as I am known.*

If Knowledge appears so very beautiful, when we
 find it so difficult of Access, and when we only see
 some broken Sketches and imperfect Outlines of
 Truth; how much superior Lustre must it needs
 display, when it shines forth in it's largest Dimen-
 sions, and in it's full Proportion? Shall we, who
 hardly guess aright, at Things before us, who, if
 there were not another Life, might justly complain
 with the Philosopher, that Nature has given indeed
 a very large Scope to our Curiosity, but set very nar-
 row Bounds to our Knowledge; shall we, I say, *in
 God's Light, see Light, nay, even see God as he is,*
 or have direct and immediate Ideas of him, as he is
 in his own Nature; whereas we now derive all our
 Knowledge from the Sources of Sensation and Re-
 flection?

Here the Body is not able to keep Pace with the
 Soul in it's Inquiries; it clogs the native Energy of
 our Thoughts: But, when our glorified Souls shall
 act in glorified Bodies, they will be ever on the
 Wing, without ever flagging, or exhausting their Vi-
 gour.

We may farther suppose, when the Soul shall have
 survived Millions of Years amidst these pure and un-
 fulfilled Joys, with what unspeakable Pleasure the

Memory

Memory shall look backward over that wide Field of SERM.
Bliss, which we have already past; and the Imagination XII.
with much greater Transport, may look forward to
that endless Ocean of Delights yet to come; still
press onward, and still find nothing to terminate it's
Views. In vain our Mind widens to take in the vast
Idea of an everlasting Happiness: In vain it adds
Thousands to Thousands, and Millions to Millions:
our Thoughts are lost in Eternity.

Were it not that this Life is the Foundation of
future Happiness, who knows but that in the un-
bounded Extent of Eternity, at some far-distant Pe-
riod of Duration, our Thoughts being engrossed by
an infinite Variety of nobler Objects, except our
Memory be very tenacious, we may forget, or at
least not think it worth our attending to, that ever
there was such an Island as this, in which we live;
such an Earth as contained this Island; or such a Sun
as enlightened this Earth? The Idea, how great so-
ever, may, in such an undetermined Process of Du-
ration, be neglected, and give Place to nobler Guests,
which will supply it's Room. When *that which is*
perfect shall come, and that which is imperfect, be done
away; the Eye of the Understanding may then com-
mand a most spacious Prospect, may trace the Oeco-
nomy of God's Providence from the first Birth of
Time to it's last Period, and survey the whole
Theatre of Nature; and then, from this Light of
the Understanding, what Heat of Devotion will
arise! And how apt shall we be to cry out, as to the
Workmanship of the Creation, *Great and marvellous*
are thy Works, Lord God Almighty! And, as to the
Conduct of his Providence, *Just and true are thy*
Ways,

SERM. *Ways, thou King of Saints!* ever adoring that Being,
XII. who is too great to be worthily praised, too good not
 to accept of our unworthy Praises.

And as our Happiness will consist in the Perfections of Soul and Body; so will it,

II. In the blessed Society and Place.

A Heathen who, in other Places, expresses himself very diffidently about a future State, yet breaks out into this triumphant Exclamation: "O glorious Day," says he, when I shall depart from "this Crowd of Men on Earth, this Sink of Pollution; and be admitted into the Assembly of "divine Spirits!" Our Author means those exalted Persons, who had done an Honour to human Nature, and, by their virtuous and noble Actions, left behind them a bright and lasting Track of Glory. This is undoubtedly an enlarged Reach of Thought. But how much more does that Religion draw back the Veil, and display to our View a brighter Scene, which tells us, that we shall hereafter reside with the *Spirits of just Men made perfect, with an innumerable Company of Angels, with Jesus, the Mediator of a better Covenant, and with God, the Judge of All?* *Father, saith our Saviour, I will that those, that thou hast given me, may be with me, that they may behold my Glory.*

When once the Soul is thus upon the Wing, when once it soars upwards, how do the Glories of the World lessen to our View! Who, when he thinks of these Things, does not despise the little Greatness here below, and pity the little Men, who can be so low-thoughted, as to be restless in the Pursuit, or

elate

elate with the Possession of worldly Honour? What would this solemn Pageantry of Grandeur be to him, who could have a direct and immediate Converse, in Heaven, with that infinite Being, who is his Father, and those ennobled Spirits, who are to be his Brethren and Associates for ever and ever?

Those who want to be resolved whether we shall know one another in a future State, may consider, that God's Justice in punishing or rewarding, will appear the more by our Knowledge of the Persons who are rewarded or punished; since Crimes admit of several Alleviations or Aggravations from personal Circumstances; insomuch that it is a known Saying, that when two Persons do the same Thing, yet it shall not be the same, by Reason of the different Circumstances of the Offenders. They may reflect that the rich Man and *Abraham* knew one another in the Parable, that the Apostles knew *Moses* and *Elias* on the Mount.

But however that be, to live amidst this august Assembly of Spirits in an uninterrupted Circulation of mutual Endearments, while the Light of our Joy grows greater by mingling with another's Flame, and the Beams are redoubled by Reflection; to join with this awful Congregation of Men and Angels in one great Chorus to our Maker; to receive from the Throne of Glory continual Emanations of Joy, and to send up to it continual Incense of Praise; this is what the Gospel promises; and this is the Height of Bliss; if we include the

III^d Thing, in which our Happiness will consist, viz. the Enjoyment of the Godhead.

SERM.

XII.

And this I take for granted, will compleat our Felicity. It is plain, that our Desires are infinite. For, if they are fixed on any finite Object, how great soever, they may still grasp at a greater. And, if our Desires are infinite, nothing can fully and adequately satisfy them, but an infinite Good, and an inexhaustible Source of Delight.

Suppose a Man in some Retirement, all secular Business discontinued, all Solicitation of outward Objects shut out; while Reason seated, as it were, on the Throne commands a Silence to the Passions: In this State of solemn Thoughtfulness and undisturbed Contemplation, when the Soul would be the ablest to form a true Estimate of her Condition, would he find himself sufficient for his own Happiness? No; in a State of solemn Thoughtfulness, in the Multitude of Thoughts, which we have within us, the divine *Comforts* can alone *refresh the Soul*. A Person, who not content with superficial Notions, sees with a piercing Eye Things naked and undisguised, as they are in themselves, according to their intrinsic Worth, and not as they are set off by the Heightenings and Colourings of the Imagination; thinks too deeply to be pleased with many Things, too deeply not to see the Littleness of almost every Thing but God, but what procures his Favour. Take away Religion, or the Relation between God and Man; and you leave nothing great, in which Man is interested. So true it is, that Irreligion can be built upon nothing, but the Ruins of every Thing, that is great, noble, and valuable in human Nature.

On

On the other Hand, it is a vulgar Error to imagine, that Men of gay, volatile, and unbalanced Minds are the most happy. No; their Happiness must be very unsteady, because the Soul, which is the Subject of it, is so unsteady and light. *They are carried up to the Heaven, and down again to the Deep.* They have sudden Starts of Joy, which are succeeded by as sudden a Flagging of the Spirits. True, consistent, unruffled Happiness, consists in a collected Way of thinking, in an even and composed Turn of Mind, in a regular Scheme of Action, and in employing our Love and Gratitude, the best of our Affections, upon God, the best of Beings: To which must be added a Freedom from Disasters, Pain and Misery, from which the Deity can alone secure us; together with those *Rivers of Pleasure* which *flow at his Right Hand for evermore*, and from thence descend upon his Creatures.

He that is the Source of our Being must be the Source of our Well-being, of our eternal Well-being. It is the Property of the Deity alone to be blessed in himself for evermore; and it is his likewise to be able to make his Creatures blessed by and from himself. God being the sole Fountain-head of Happiness, the Streams of it must be either derived from him, or we must live in *a barren or dry Land, where no Water is.*

Unenlightened Reason could never have proved that a Being, of whose Greatness there is no End, would condescend to make an inferior Creature happy, by filling up each craving Void with substantial and unallayed Satisfaction, by making himself his Portion for ever, and bestowing upon him an ex-

SERM.
XII.

ceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. But Revelation steps in to our Aid, and persuades us, that he who gave his Son for our Ransom, and his Holy Spirit for our Guide, will with them give us all Things, or rather himself, who is all in all, for our consummate Reward. As these Scripture Expressions, *to see long Life*, and *to see good Days*, mean to enjoy long Life and good Days; so when it is said, *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*; to see him signifies to enjoy him, or to receive from him directly and immediately those Communications of his Favour, and that Fulness of Joy, which will make the Soul cry out, *This God shall be our God for ever and ever.*

If the Will and Understanding be the noblest Faculties of the Soul; if it be the greatest Happiness to have the noblest Faculties exercised upon the noblest Objects; then how great must our Happiness be, when the Will is exercised in loving him who is the sovereign Good, and the Understanding in contemplating him who is the sovereign Truth?

To conclude this Head, we shall be happy in the Perfections of Soul and Body, happy in the blessed Society and Place; and lastly, inconceivably happy in the Communication of the divine Favour, and the Light of his Countenance. Our Understandings will be enlightened with the brightest Truths, our Wills regulated with unspotted Holiness, and our Affections satisfied with the greatest Good.

Having thus described the Happiness of those in a future State, who have made a right Use of their Talents, I proceed to my 11d general Head, *viz.* to draw his Character who certainly did so.

I shall

I shall begin with his Character as a Writer. No SERM.
XII.
 Body was more capable of shining as an original Writer, and striking out new and unbeaten Tracks of Thought. For he had Mr. *Locke's* Clearness of Reasoning, as well as the extensive Reading of Bishop *Stillingfleet*. He had push'd his Enquiries so far into Matters of a very high and elevated Nature, that where his Views stopt short, there was not merely the Boundary of *his* Understanding; it was the Boundary of *human* Understanding; the Point, where Knowledge ceases, and Ignorance commences. An elaborate Attempt had been made to demonstrate the Existence of God *a priori*, and that He is the *Substratum* of Space. And when the strong Man well armed with Learning and Abilities, kept his new erected metaphysical Building, his intellectual Goods were at Peace just so long — till a stronger than he arose, and stripped him of the Armour in which he trusted*.

He had thoroughly studied the Doctrine of the Trinity long before he entered into the Controversy; he sat down to the Subject without any pre-conceived darling Hypothesis of his own advanced in Print about the Nature and Attributes of God, which might tempt him to adjust the Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, as well as he could to it, by far-fetched Criticisms and elaborate Comments; he viewed it,

* The Substance of what he wrote upon that Subject in some Letters to a Gentleman, has been communicated to the Public by the ingenious Mr. *Law* of *Christ-College* in *Cambridge*, partly in his excellent Notes on Archbishop *King's* *Origin of Evil*, and partly in his *Enquiry into the Ideas of Space*, &c. To which is added, *A Dissertation on the Argument a priori, by a learned Hand, viz. Dr. Waterland.*

SERM. without any Biass, in the several Lights of Scripture,

XII. Reason, and Antiquity; he read, he weighed in the

Balance, whatever had been said against it as well as for it; he conversed upon that Subject with the ablest Advocate that *Arianism* ever boasted, and corresponded with another very considerable Writer on that Side of the Question; his Determination was not owing to any sudden Heat of Fancy, it was the mature Result of a thorough, honest and unwearied Examination; during which, through too close an Application, he greatly impaired his Health, and laid the Foundation of that ill Habit of Body, which at last occasioned his Death. How he was, in a Manner forced, into the Controversy, by a Person's committing his Queries to the Press without his Consent, or even Knowledge; he has given the World an Account in the Preface to the first of those excellent Tracts, as the late Earl of *Nottingham** justly stiles them, which he wrote on that Subject: Whereas his Adversaries had laid the main Stress of their Cause upon philosophical Subtleties and Objections; particularly, that there was no Medium for the *Catholics* between *Sabellianism* and *Tritheism*; he disarmed them of their metaphysical Artillery, turned it upon them, and made them seem willing to put the Issue of their Cause solely upon the Foot of Scripture. And let me observe, with what an ill Grace mere Smatterers in Knowledge charge the Doctrine of the Trinity with Absurdities from the

* See his Answer to Mr. *Whiston*, p. 19. where he calls upon him, or any Man else, to give a just Answer to the excellent Tracts writ by Dr. *Waterland* in Vindication of *Christ's* Divinity.

abstract Nature and Reason of the Thing; when three Persons of distinguished Abilities (for with three he was at once engaged) were unable, though they did not want an hearty Inclination, to make good a Charge of that Nature. SERM. XII.

Arguments under his happy Direction and Management, were *Arrows* (of which his *Quiver* was full) in the Hands of a mighty Man. They carried greater Force with them, and made deeper Impressions, than when they came from a Person of the common Size: And therefore he was not ashamed when he spake with his ablest Adversary in set Conferences*. His Head was an immense Library, where the Treasures of Learning were ranged in such exact Order, that, whatever himself or his Friends wanted, he could have immediate Recourse to, without any Embarrassment. A prodigious Expende of Reading, without a Confusion of Ideas, is almost the peculiar Characteristic of his Writings. His Works, particularly Those upon our Saviour's Divinity, and the Importance of the Doctrine, and the Eucharist, into which he has digested the Learning of all preceding Ages, will, we may venture to say, be transmitted to, and stand the Examination of, all succeeding ones. He has so thoroughly exhausted every Subject that he wrote a set Treatise upon; that it is impossible to hit upon any thing which is not in his Writings, or to express that more justly and clearly, which is there.

* Some Conferences were proposed and held between him and his learned Antagonist before a very great and illustrious Person; but those Conferences were dropt after the Dr. declared his full Conviction of the Truth and Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and his Resolution to maintain it.

SERM.

XII.

Yet, whatever Expence of Time and Thought he might be at in laying in Materials, it did not cost him much Pains to commit them to Writing. The largest Volume*, which he has published, wrote with great Accuracy, he, in two Months, finished, and sent to the Press. But a Genius is to writing well, as what good Nature is to acting generously. It is an Aptitude to say, as the other is to do, those great Things with Ease, Readiness and Freedom, which those, who want that Advantage, can scarce perform with much awkward Pains and Industry. Some Writers, who have made no inconsiderable Figure in the learned World, have been greatly indebted for it to the valuable Notices and Observations, with which he furnished them. But he was so disinterested, that, provided the World was instructed, he was very indifferent, who had the Honour of doing it. He had so ample a Fund of Knowledge, that he could impart it liberally, without any Danger of impoverishing himself. Meaner Proficients in Literature must husband their slender Stock more warily.

Nor was Controversy his only Talent. His Sermons, adapted to the Level of common Capacities, yet instructive to the highest, were composed with that Plainness and Simplicity, that Persons of a slender Share of Sense might be vain enough to think themselves capable of writing as well: But Men of Judgment know, that nothing is more difficult to write, than such easy Writing, as his was. Free from that obscure Diligence, which sometimes embarrasses

* The second Defence of his Queries.

barrasses the Writings of great Scholars, he states SERM.
each Point of Duty judiciously and accurately, ex- XII.
plains it happily, and always goes to the Bottom of
his Subject.

This Character may be given of his Writings in general, that whatever Beauties of Style some few of his latest Compositions may want; they have all of them, that to recommend them, which is more valuable than all Languages besides, the Language of the Heart. In his learned Writings he asserted nothing, but what he firmly believed; and in his plain and familiar Discourses taught nothing but what he practised. He spoke and wrote with that undissembled Freedom and Openness, which ever accompanies an undesigning Honesty, and a thorough Conviction of the Truth. For it is the Property of Truth and Innocence to stand forth to view, without any studied Disguises, *naked, but not ashamed*. Whereas Falshood is generally attended with Cowardice, the Companion of Guilt; it is afraid to speak out, and poorly skulks behind a thousand little Artifices.

But this brings me, *2dly*, to give some Account of his Life and Conversation.

His Head and Heart were constantly at work upon Points worthy of him. And, yet, if any Company came in, he would be immediately free and disengaged, forget the hard Student in the easy Companion, listen to any innocent Conversation, without any seeming Absence of Thought, and join in it with Life and Vivacity. I mention it, as an amazing Instance of the Liberty and Extent of his Mind; that a Person generally intent (too intent with

SERM. with regard to his Health) upon great Things,
 XII. could at once, with a quick and sudden Transition
 of Thought, enter into the minute Affairs and ordinary Occurrences of Life. The Capacities of little Minds are soon filled up, and any one Point, though of no great Importance, so engrosses the whole Man, as not to leave Room for the Admittance of any Thing else. But great and enlarged Souls can take in Variety of Subjects, and have a greater Command over their Ideas, saying to one, *Go, and it goeth*; and bidding another, *Come, and it cometh*.

Though he would bear a Part in any innocent Discourse, he had an Aversion to the reigning Vices of Conversation: He was very tender of Men's Characters: He guided his Words, as well as regulated his Actions, with Discretion; and at the same Time, that his Sagacity enabled him to discover, his Charity prompted him to cover and conceal, *a Multitude of Sins*.

The Conversation in which he chiefly delighted, was with learned Men, who came to consult him. In which, instead of fetching a wide Compass round about the Meaning, he entered at once into the Heart of a Question, with that Quickness of Apprehension and Perspicuity of Expression, which were confessed Parts of his Character: He saw, at one Glance, where the main Stress of it lay, omitted no material Difficulties, and dwelt upon none but what were such; would not divert into By-points, but pared off all Extraneousness, and never lost Sight of the main Point, till he dismissed you thoroughly satisfied about the Question, and what was indeed unquestionable, his own great Abilities: He struck Light into perplexed

plexed and uncommon Subjects; and placed even common ones in a clearer and more advantageous Point of View. SERM.
XII.

He had an excellent Turn for Business. For his Clearness of Reasoning was not confined to learned Subjects; it extended almost to all. He would talk and write upon Things quite foreign to the common Track of his Studies, with such Penetration, that one would imagine the main Bent of them had been applied that Way. Some of his Acquaintances are living Witnesses of this, who have consulted him, and received Satisfaction from him upon very intricate Affairs, which had no Connexion with, or Relation to, Divinity.

Yet his great Abilities were so endeared by his Humanity, Affability, and Condescension, that none, I believe, ever wished them less, but those who were embarked in a Way of thinking essentially opposite to his. His Knowledge entirely filled, and therefore did not swell or puff up his Mind. The Brightness of some People is like that of Lightning, an insufferable Brightness; his shone upon you with *beaming in it's Wings*; a gentle, serene, and unoffending Lustre. For though at a Distance you might admire and reverence the *great* Man, yet upon a more intimate Acquaintance you could not help loving, what you plainly saw, the *good* Man, the Man of cool Wisdom and steady Piety, fixed in his Principles, but candid in his Spirit. It is the Interest of mere Pretenders to Knowledge and Greatness to affect a mysterious Gravity, and to keep their Inferiors at a Distance; the Idol is not to be seen unveiled, or in a full and open Light by it's Votaries,
left

SERM. XII. lest they should discover it's Deformity, Dr. *Waterland* was always easy of Access, his Carriage free and familiar; his Heart, and his Countenance, the Index of his Heart, open to you, without a shy and reserved Manner, without Stateliness and Solemnity; cautious, but not artful; honest, but not unguarded; glad to communicate, though not ambitious to display his great Knowledge.

He was substantially good, without studying Appearances; for those who are rich in good Works are not ostentatious of their Riches; whereas there is an ostentatious Poverty in Men of very low Degrees of Goodness, just as there is in Men in low Circumstances, which prompts them to make a fair Shew, when there is no Substance to support it.

He hated all Party as such, and would never have gone the Lengths of any. He never made a Sacrifice of *true* Greatness, through an eager Pursuit of what the World *calls* such. The Preferments which he had, were bestowed upon him without any Application from himself directly or indirectly; they were not the Result of his Sollicitations, much less of base and unworthy Compliances; they were the voluntary Tribute of great and good Men, for his Services to Christianity in general, and the Church of *England* in particular; nor must it be forgotten that he might have been advanced much higher, by the Recommendation and Interest of that very excellent Prelate, who in the Opinion of every true Friend to the Church, deservedly fills the highest Station in it.

He weighed a Thing long, and considered it on every Side before he formed a Resolution; but when he had

had once formed it, he was ever afterwards determined and unmoveable. He saw Things truly, because he saw them coolly and dispassionately; whereas we see nothing, through the Mists of Passion, in it's genuine Proportions. He was not one of those narrow-spirited Men, who confine all Merit within their own Pale, he thought candidly, and spoke advantageously of many who thought very differently from him. When any virulent Pamphlet was wrote (as scarce any Person had more wrote) against him, it did not disconcert or ruffle his Temper; he did not detest the Author as a malicious Enemy, he pitied him as an unhappy Man; he had nothing violent in his Nature; he abhorred all Thoughts of Persecution; cool and prudential Measures entirely suited his Frame of Mind; those who entertain a different Opinion of him were Strangers to him; Controversy had not at all embittered or set an Edge upon his Spirits. The meek and candid Christian was not lost in the *Disputer of this World*. I never saw him in a different Humour, no, not even in his last Illness; the same unaffected Chearfulness, the same Evenness and Sedateness, which was his distinguishing Character, appeared from the first Commencement of our Acquaintance to the last. Whatever painful Operations were thought necessary, he submitted to them without Reluctance, and underwent them with Patience and Resignation. He was very amiable in a domestic Light; though he felt great Uneasiness, he gave none, but what arose from a Fellow-feeling of his Sufferings; even then humane and benevolent to all about him, but especially to her with whom he had lived in an uninterrupted Harmony for Twenty-one Years, bringing

SERM. bringing forth valuable Things out of the good Treasures of his Head and Heart; communicative of

XII.

any Thing that was good, he would have engrossed nothing to himself — but his Sufferings, which yet he could not engross; for every good-natured Person that saw him, could not but suffer *with* a Man, *by* and *from* whom they were to suffer nothing. The same sound Principles, from which he never swerved, and of which he never expressed the least Diffidence, which he had unanswerably defended in his Health, supported and invigorated his Spirits during his Sickness; and he died a little before his Entrance on his Fifty-eighth Year, with the same Composure with which he lived; and is now gone to offer up to God a whole Life laid out, or rather worn out in his Service. For he was like a Light in the Sanctuary, that wastes and consumes itself in *shining out before Men, that they may glorify their Father which is in Heaven.* Never weary with well-doing; he knew not what it was to be idle, the Time never lay upon his Hands, and therefore he was a Stranger to the Spleen, Melancholy, and imaginary Uneasinesses, which are often as vexatious as real ones. He was a remarkable Instance, that hard Study does not always sour a Man's Temper, though Idleness most certainly does, the Parent of Fretfulness, Peevishness, and an Acrimony of Spirit. In Health he was always easy, because never idle; always employed in, but never encumbered with Business. He resolved Cases of Conscience, he removed Doubts and Scruples; his Assistance was often asked, and never, I believe, refused, when any useful Work of Learning was on Foot.

What,

What chiefly endeared him was, not that he had gained a compleat Victory over *Arians* and *Socinians*: It was, that he had gained (a much nobler Conquest) a Conquest over himself. For his Reason seemed to have got the better as much over his Passions in Matters of Practice, as it had over his Imagination in Matters of Belief.

SERM.
XII.

I have now paid the Debt of Gratitude, which I owed to a great and good Man of the clearest Head I ever conversed with, and, what is still more valuable, of an honest Heart; who never, through Weakness, mistook, nor through Fear, deserted, nor through Interest, betrayed the Cause of Religion. I shall always reckon it my greatest Honour, that I am, in a particular Manner, obliged to him; to whom the Christian World in general is obliged for his excellent Works; whom I revered as a Father, to whom I had Recourse as my Guide, and who received me always with that genuine Flow of Good-nature, and Openness of Soul, which distinguishes the Friend.

It is a melancholy Reflection, that whoever dares vigorously assert, and steadfastly adhere to the Doctrines of the Church of *England*, must expect to be branded with opprobrious Terms, and decried as a Bigot. It will be of little Avail to him, that his Abilities are uncommon; his Notions must be so too, to recommend them to the Vogue of the Age. As if some Men were not as liable to a fond Attachment (or, what is the same Thing) Bigotry to their own singular Notions, sometimes the Result of Pride and Vanity; as others are to the received fundamental Doctrines of a *Protestant* Church, which

have

SERM. have stood the Test of Ages, ever attacked; and
 XII. ever triumphant. Our own particular darling Tenets, by which we stand distinguished from the Bulk of *Christians*, we look upon, as our private Inclosures, our private Walks, in which we have a Property exclusive of others, and which we take Care to cultivate, beautify, and fence in against all Invaders: The received Notions, however important, we are more indifferent to, as the common Field, or public Walks, which lie open to every Body.

At such a Juncture it cannot be improper, however unfashionable it may be, to bear my Testimony to the Merit of a Man who dared to think deeply and thoroughly for himself; though he did not think by himself. And give me Leave to conclude his Character by observing: That a Man must have had an exceeding good, or an exceeding bad Head and Heart, who could converse oft and long with him, without becoming wiser as to the former, and better as to the latter *.

He

* Having so often mentioned his Clearness of Reasoning, it may not be improper to give the following Instance of it. In the Year 1714, at the Commencement, he kept a Divinity Act for his Batchelor of Divinity's Degree. His first Question was, *Whether Arian Subscription was lawful?* A Question worthy of him, who had the Integrity to abhor, with a generous Scorn, all Prevarication; and the Capacity to see through and detect those evasive Arts, by which some would palliate their Disingenuity. When Dr. James, the Professor, had endeavoured to answer his *Thesis*, and embarrass the Question with the Dexterity of a Person long practised in all the Arts of a subtle Disputant; he immediately replied in an extempore Discourse of above half an Hour long, with such an easy Flow of proper and significant Words, and such an undisturbed Presence of Mind, as if he had been reading what he has since printed, *The Case of the Arian Subscription considered, and the Supplement to it*; he unravelled the Professor's Fallacies, reinforced his own Reasonings, and shewed himself so perfect a Master of the Language,

He is now far above, as indeed he was in his Life, the Reach of the inveterate Malice of little Writers; and he needs not our Praises: He has received that Praise which is infinitely more valuable than the united Commendations of all created Beings, the invaluable Praise of his great Creator; *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant: Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* It is not in our Power to defend Christianity, as he did, by unanswerable Writings: But it is in our Power, and should be in our Inclination, to adorn it, as he did likewise, by our Lives and Conversation.

Then in the Article of Death, when the Soul reflects that the next important Moment may be decisive of her eternal Happiness or Misery, that she may, in the Twinkling of an Eye, appear unveiled at the dread Tribunal of Justice; when, on these Considerations, without a great Share of supernatural Assistance, a certain Fearfulness is apt to come upon the best, and an horrible Dread to overwhelm the worst; then may we *depart in Peace*, as he did, out of this World, with Hopes *full of a blessed Immortality* in the next, through the Merits of our Saviour. Then may we, with a vital Sense of the Divine Goodness, bid Adieu to all sublunary Things: Welcome Death, to the Wicked *the King of Terrors*,

Language, the Subject, and himself; that all agreed, No one ever appeared to greater Advantage. There were several Members of the University of Oxford there, who remember the great Applauses he received, and the uncommon Satisfaction which he gave. He was happy in a first Opponent, one of the brightest Ornaments of the Church, and finest Writers of the Age, who gave full Play to his Abilities, and called forth all that Strength of Reason, of which he was Master.

SERM.
XII.

but to the Good *the Messenger of Peace*; Welcome, Eternity; Welcome, thou supreme Being, who, as the Source of Nature, didst create and speak us into Existence; who, as the Source of Grace, didst make us new Creatures; and who, as the Source of Glory, wilt advance us into Angels of Bliss and *Partakers of the Divine Nature*.

Then shall we be sensible, that we miscale Things here; and, what we stile the Day of our Death, is, in the true Estimate of Things, our great Birth-Day, our Birth-Day to eternal Life.

When the Sun shall be no more our Light by Day, neither for Brightness shall the Moon give Light unto us: But the Lord shall be unto us an everlasting Light, and our God our Glory. Our Sun shall no more go down, neither shall our Moon withdraw itself: For the Lord shall be our everlasting Light, and the Days of our Mourning shall be ended.

That we may enjoy ourselves, let us be temperate, chaste, moderate; that we may enjoy one another, let us be benevolent, humane, charitable; that we may enjoy God, let us be pious, devout and holy, detesting the Vices, and despising the Vanities of this World.

Now to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Might, Majesty, Dominion, Praise and Adoration, both now and for ever. Amen.

10 JA 67

The END of VOL. I.